New Materials for the Study of Literacy in History: Report of the Indiana Conference on Literacy in Japanese History

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Richard Rubinger
Indiana University

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#3 (Summer 2008 ***New Materials for the Study of Literacy in in History: Report of the Indiana Conference on Literacy in Japanese History***

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Introduction

Richard Rubinger
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The essays contained here are evidence that the field of history of education in Japan is alive and well. Each of the authors is an established scholar in the field who has shown considerable courage by applying his or her considerable skills to a subject that has been almost entirely neglected in Japan--the study of literacy in Japanese history. Between 2002 and 2005 the authors received support for their projects from the Nihon Gakujutsu Shinkōkai (Japan Society for the Promotion of Science) and a conference report was issued in March, 2006 edited by Professor Ohto Yasuhiro entitled, *Zen kindai Nihon ni okeru shikiji jōkyō ni kansuru kiso teki kenkyū* (Studies on Literacy in Early Modern Japan).

In the fall of 2006 the group traveled to the United States and participated in a second conference "The International Conference on the History of Popular Literacy in Japan" at Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana. This conference and the reports written by the Japanese researchers were supported by Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research (B) 2006-2009 from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science. The conference in Indiana was also supported by the East Asian Studies Center and the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures at Indiana University. All of the participants are indebted to these organizations for their support.

Revised versions of earlier papers were delivered in English by all the participants at the Indiana Conference. We also benefited from a presentation on signatures appearing on Japanese Christian documents from the early seventeenth century by Professor Emeritus of Indiana University, Jurgis Elisonas. This Report consists of the edited versions of papers from the Japanese participants. I would like to thank Professor Kawamura Hajime for technical help with the conference, Ms. Susan Furukawa for help in the editing process, and Mr. Paul Styles for computer assistance.

Each of the papers deals with the subject of literacy in Japanese history. This is a subject that has not been extensively treated in Japanese scholarship so these papers represent a real breakthrough. Some of them are entirely original and fill in important gaps

in our understanding of how rural farmers in the pre-modern age were developing reading and writings skills.

The inspiration for my own work on literacy[1] and for many of these papers came from a seminal article written by Professor Kimura Masanobu[2] which was the first to raise the issue of whether personal marks made by commoners on historical documents could be used to estimate literacy among commoners in the way that personal signatures on wedding registers and so forth have been used so successfully in the West. Let me just say a few introductory words on this subject because many of the papers take off from this premise.

The subject of literacy in Japanese history has not generally caught the attention of scholars of historians of Japanese education. One important reason for this is the widespread belief that systematic data, such as the signature data widely used in Western studies of literacy, are unavailable in Japan. The extensive use of engraved seals (*hanko*) on historical documents in place of individually scrawled signatures has no doubt contributed to this belief.

Despite some debate about the appropriateness of signatures to accurately measure the ability to read and write, they are generally believed to be a reasonable measure and have been successfully used in Europe and America to create impressive databases for the analysis of literacy in history. It is also well known that Japan has one of the most complete databases of population information in the world in *shūmon aratame-chō*, or "religious affiliation registers," used systematically from the early seventeenth century into the middle of nineteenth to certify that every individual Japanese--man, woman, and child--was a member of a Buddhist temple and that none was affiliated with Christianity in any way. These documents have been widely used by demographers to examine changes in population, family and marriage patterns and so forth, but never for literacy. This is because from the mid-seventeenth century onward individuals certified their names on these documents with seals, which provide no indication of ability to read or write.

It was Professor Kimura's discovery, however, that before 1650 or so individuals did certify their names with a wide variety of individual marks, which may be used to indicate

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[1] Richard Rubinger, *Popular Literacy in Early Modern Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007). See especially Chapter 2.

[2] Kimura Masanobu, "Kinsei shikiji kenkyū ni okeru shūshi ninbetsu-chō no shiryōteki kanōsei," *Nihon kyōiku shi kenkyū* 14 (august 1885): 43-64.

their level of literacy. *Kaō*, which I have rendered as "ciphers" in English, are simple but elegant designs, originally derived from signatures, used for personal identification on documents. They require considerable mastery of the brush and may be considered signatures and a mark of literacy. Abbreviated ciphers (*ryakuō*), found in large numbers on commoner documents, are also rendered with a brush but are much simpler than ciphers. They run the gamut from simple ciphers, which might suggest some level of literacy, to mere circles and lines, which probably don't. Then there are "stem stamps" (*fude jukuin*) which mark a document with the stump of a brush, "blood seals" (*keppan*), and "nail prints" (*tsume-in*), which almost certainly are marks made by illiterates.

The names of individuals from the non-elite classes on historical documents, like the documents themselves, were almost always written by a scribe. Personal marks, however, were made by individuals under or alongside these names to validate or certify their name. Because the search for these personal marks has only just begun, the available documents are few. The papers presented here are important because each, in its own way, seeks to enlarge the database from which future analyses of literacy in Japanese history can take place.

The essays that follow are set in roughly chronological order. The first essay by Professor Suzuki Rie provides a general context by looking at the derivation of the Japanese writing system and the advantages and disadvantages of Chinese characters and the *kana* syllabaries to the spread of literacy. Professor Ohto Yasuhiro looks at the early rise of Buddhism in Japan and its impact on the rise of Japanese literacy, including an analysis of signatures on documents of the Ikkō sect. Although links between religious organizations and literacy is firmly established in Europe, Professor Ohto is one of the first to make the connection for medieval Japan.

Professor Umemura Kayo takes us into entirely new territory by providing evidence for farmer signatures going back to the fourteenth century. The unique and creative ways that farmers distinguished themselves on these early documents suggests a wealth of possibilities for future research on signatures and literacy in Japan. The "Godfather" of signature studies in Japan, Professor Kimura Masanobu, provides a brief glimpse of his path breaking work by analyzing population and religious affiliation registers in Kyoto and a section of Nagasaki in the early Tokugawa period (1603-1868).

Professor Amano Haruko looks at another set of data rarely used for literacy studies. She looks at the role of *ōraimono* (popular readers) in advancing the cultural and literacy

lives of merchant women in the Tokugawa period. Professor Ohta Motoko does a close reading of farmer diaries to reveal parental attitudes toward the training of children and the development of literacy in pre-modern Japan. Professor Yakuwa Tomohiro brings us into the Meiji period and analyzes some never before seen data on illiteracy. He suggests some causal links between occupations and literacy and develops a new concept he calls the "urban effect" which should open new areas of future research.

Written Characters in Ancient Japan: The Use of *Kanji* for National Unification

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The Introduction of *Kanji* into Japan Prior to the Sixth Century[1]

In the area of the Japan archipelago there existed no indigenous system of written characters at the time when Chinese characters *(kanji)* were introduced. With China perceived at the center of the international order of that era, *kanji*, Buddhism, Confucianism and the *ritsuryō* system of government administration gradually spread throughout East Asia.[2] *Kanji* was the medium that made the spread of the Buddhism, Confucianism and the *ritsuryō* system possible. Thus the role of Chinese characters is basic to understanding the broad cultural similarities that exist throughout East Asia even now.

Kanji were first introduced into Japan between 100 BCE and 100 AD. A number of Chinese characters were found carved on a gold seal, as well as on coins and copper mirrors discovered in Japan dating to this period. The golden seal from the Emperor of China was unearthed in Fukuoka Prefecture. The inscription reads, "Kan no Wa no na no kokuou." It is among the oldest historical artifacts bearing written characters found in Japan. The characters on this gold seal indicate that the region in which it was found was nominally under the sovereignty of the Chinese empire. However, in this period the people of Japan were not aware of the implications of written script and the ability to actually use

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[1] Ueda Masaaki,*Ueda Masaaki chosakushū* 2: *Kodai kokka to higashi ajia* (Kadokawa Shoten,1998): 183-199. Hirakawa Minami, "Sōsetsu moji ni yoru shihai," in *Shihai to moji*, edited by Hirakawa Minami, Okimori Takuya, Sakaehara Towao and Yamanaka Akira (Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2006): 1-7.

[2] Nishijima Sadao, *Kodai higashi ajia sekai to Nihon*, edited by Lee Sungsi, (Iwanami Shoten, 2000): 3-10.

kanji did not come about until some time later.[3]

From the third century onward, when a powerful queen Himiko was able to consolidate power and bring neighboring regions under her authority, Chinese characters and formal Chinese writing started to be used by a proto Japanese state in its diplomatic relations with China. By the fifth century, *kanji* began to be used as a means for political unification within the Japan archipelago. The content of the inscription on an iron sword unearthed from a burial mound in the latter half of the fifth century at Inariyama Tumulus in Saitama Prefecture includes the genealogy of eight generations of retainers who served the most powerful king. However, until the fifth century, the only persons who could actually use *kanji* were persons who had come to Japan from China or the Korean peninsula. Persons coming from Korea were particularly numerous during the fifth century. These persons brought not only *kanji* skills, but many other types of technology and culture to the Japan archipelago and their abilities were organized in the service of the state under the power of the central authority[4].

In the first half of the sixth century, Buddhism was introduced into the Japan archipelago from the Korean peninsula and, in the first half of seventh century, it is said that there were over 1300 Buddhist monks and nuns active in Japan.[5] Because it was through written texts that Buddhism was transmitted, it is likely that the teaching of Buddhism played a major role in the spread of Chinese characters.

When *kanji* was first used by the Japanese, it was perceived as a foreign language script. The Japanese language could not easily be written using *kanji* or Chinese formal text writing methods. The reasons for this included the fact that the word order was different, Chinese is monosyllabic whereas Japanese is polysyllabic, and Chinese is uninflected whereas Japanese is a highly inflected language. By using Japanese phonetic readings for Chinese characters, it gradually became possible to write, with some difficulty, the vernacular Japanese using Chinese characters.[6] In addition, when writing sentences, the aid

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[3] See for example, Kobayashi Yoshinori, *Zusetsu Nihon no kanji* (Taishūkan Shoten, 1998): 15-19.

[4] Hanada Katsuhiro, "Kofun jidai no tetsu tekki seisan kōbō," in *Kashiwara Rekishi Shiryōkan kanpō*, 3 (Kashiwara Rekishi Shiryōkan, 1992). Tanaka Fumio, "Toraijin to ōken chiiki," in *Wakoku to higashi ajia*, edited by Suzuki Yasutami(Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2002): 259.

[5] Sakamoto Tarō, Ienaga Saburō, Inoue Mitsusada, and Ono Susumu, eds., *Nihon shoki* (Iwanami Shoten, 1965): 210.

[6] Inukai Takashi, "Nihongo o moji de kaku," in *Rettō no kodaishi 6: Gengo to moji*, edited by Uehara Mahito, Shiraishi Taichirō, Yoshikawa Shinji, and Yoshimura Takehiko (Iwanami Shoten, 2006): 12-15.

of persons coming from Korea was essential. The grammar of Korean and Japanese are similar and from a very early period, the countries on the Korean peninsula had adopted Chinese characters to their own language.

As can be seen from the foregoing, it was possible for Japan to adopt the use of *kanji* from a more advanced country like China via Korea. Persons who had acquired the newest forms of culture brought Chinese script with them from the Korean peninsula. Nevertheless, by the middle of the seventh century, those who needed training in Japan in the use of Chinese characters were relatively few. However, from the middle of the seventh century, conditions both in Korea and in Japan had changed.

Widespread Adoption of *Kanji* in Japan — The Seventh and Eighth Centuries

At the beginning of the eighth century, the so-called "*ritsuryō* state" was established. The *ritsuryō* state refers to a system of government based on the Chinese concepts of *ritsu* (penal) and *ryō* (constitutional and administrative) laws with an emperor at the top of a centralized system of government administration. This also includes a central bureaucratic structure as part of the system of administration that governs the people who are listed in family registries, a unified system based on administration by decree. The capital in the eighth century was located almost in the center of the Japan archipelago at Nara. Japan was divided into about 70 local *kuni* **(**provinces) that were further divided into *gun* (districts) that contained *ri* (the smallest unit of administration). Written decrees were sent from the capital to the regions and reports were sent back to the capital. Thus, the relationship between the central government and the provinces depended heavily on written documents.

In order to maintain the operations of the state, training of officials in the use of *kanji* was begun. A training school was established in the capital itself and a training school was also established in each province. *Keisho*, or Confucian texts, were used as the basic teaching materials. It was possible for the children of central government officials and of important regional officials to attend these schools.[7] In the schools of the early period, students were taught to read the *Keisho* text by rote using Chinese pronunciation of the

[7] See for example, Hisaki Yukio, *Nihon kodai gakkō no kenkyū* (Tamagawa Daigaku Shuppanbu, 1990): 49-74 and Suzuki Rie, "University Education in Ancient Times," in *Journal of Japanese Trade & Industry* (September / October 1999): 38-42.

character. When this was mastered they received lectures on the content of the passage. In other words, the process of reading was emphasized in the early schools. Since printing technology had not advanced very far at this period, the memorization of *Keisho* was regarded as important because it made possible the writing of official texts from memorized content.[8] In addition, since the *ritsuryō* system was premised upon Confucian teachings, it was necessary to study the *Keisho* in order to become a public official.

In the sixth century, Chinese characters were primarily written on metal. However, from the seventh century onward, paper, thin strips of wood, and ceramic materials came into use. In many different areas around Japan, wooden strips termed *mokkan* used for official correspondence have been unearthed. These are one of the primary sources for saying that by the first half of the eighth century, *kanji* culture had penetrated regional government offices.[9] The *mokkan* differed in size, depending on what they were to be used for. Some of the larger ones reached 60 centimeters in length. Although paper was used for the final drafts of long documents for formal use, *mokkan* were used for memos for everyday matters. *Mokkan* were quite durable. It was possible to write on them and then shave the writing off several times and write on the clean surface. They were frequently used for nametags or summons, notifications, bulletins and writing practice.[10] They have been found in volumes of up to 300,000 pieces, including shavings.[11]

The people who handled documents and decrees from the government in local areas were the "secretaries" in district level offices. These "secretaries" were generally from prominent families in the district. Their positions were termed *shuzei* and *shuchō*. The *gun shosei* at the county level would live in villages with farming families. The *shuzei* and *shuchō* would normally communicate directly with the *kokushi*, the head official of the region. They would write reports to him and communicate decrees from the *gun* office to the village level. The *gun shosei* was in charge of making up family registries and documents related to the collection of taxes. These records contained such information as name, gender, and physical appearance of local residents. When extant examples of documents prepared by *shuzei* and *shuchō* were examined, there were few cases of mistakes in character use or of missing characters. However, in the case of documents made by the

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[8] Tōno Haruyuki, *Nihon kodai mokkan no kenkyū* (Hanawa Shobō, 1993): 199.
[9] Satō Makoto, *Shutsudo shiryō no kodaishi* (Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppankai, 2002): 12-14.
[10] Hirakawa Minami, ed., *Kodai Nihon no moji sekai* (Taishūkan Shoten, 2000): 172-173
[11] See for example, Yamashita Shin'ichirō, "Kezurikuzu" in *Shihai to moji*, edited by Hirakawa Minami, Okimori Takuya, Sakaehara Towao, and Yamanaka Akira (Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2006): 349.

gun shosei, many mistakes were found.[12] In addition, there were some ceramic items unearthed from villages where *gun shosei* lived. Most of them had only one or two characters written with Chinese on them. They were often the same characters with similar shapes so they were probably written by the same person with a specific objective in mind.[13] These examples suggest that there were some provincials in villages who had learned how to copy characters quite early in Japanese history. However, one can sense that their understanding of and facility with Chinese characters was limited.

In the *ritsuryō* state, in addition to the policy of governing by written edict, verbal messages were also transmitted. A *bōjisatsu* (bulletin) dating from around the middle of the ninth century was unearthed at the ruins of a regional government office located at the Kamo excavation site in Ishikawa Prefecture. This material consisted of eight homilies for farmers. The material urged farmers to put their best efforts into farming and forbade them from getting drunk and getting into trouble. This message was posted on the main road where it would be noticed by the local inhabitants. However, in actual practice, since few of the local inhabitants could read, the message was more effectively delivered verbally.[14]

For the average person Chinese characters were of little use in communicating information or for keeping records. Rather, they were regarded as a form of magic spell. *Kanji* written on unearthed pottery from village sites dating from the eighth through the tenth century, have an appearance qualitatively different from others and suggest that they had a special use in rituals. So even if Chinese characters could not be read, apparently they could be used as religious or ornamental symbols.

The period when the Japanese were beginning to use *kanji* closely coincided with the period when a centralized *ritsuryō* state was being established. Chinese characters, as the official script of the state, had a unifying function throughout the Japan archipelago. From that time to the present, the particular script of the Japanese, based heavily on Chinese characters, has remained a defining characteristic of Japanese identity and culture.

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[12] Hirakawa Minami, "Kodai shakai ni okeru moji no shūjukudo wa dono teido de atta ka," in *Kokubungaku:Kaishaku to kyōzai no kenkyū*, 41(6) (Gakutōsha,1996): 116-125.

[13] Hirakawa Minami, *Bokusho doki no kenkyū* (Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2000): 259-317.

[14] Ishikawa Ken Maizō Bunkazai Senta, ed., *Hakken kodai no ofuregaki* (Taishūkan Shoten, 2001): 38-40. Hirakawa Minami, *Kodai chihō mokkan no kenkyū* (Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2003): 124.

The Japanese Use of *Kanji* — From the Ninth Century Onward

Written Chinese was initially introduced to the countries of East Asia as a foreign language. However, as time passed, other cultures, like the Japanese, put their own indigenous marks on the use of *kanji*. These innovations included the following: (1) Using *kanji* to write an indigenous language, such as the *chu nom* script of Vietnamese and the Japanese *on* readings of *kanji*; (2) Using Chinese characters as a base from which entirely new phonetic characters were derived, such as the two Japanese *kana* syllabaries, *hiragana* and *katakana*; (3) Developing entirely new symbols separate from Chinese characters, such as the 24 phonemic symbols of the Korean *hangul* alphabet.

Around the ninth century, Japanese created the *hiragana* syllabary by simplifying Chinese characters and writing them in a cursive manner to indicate a Japanese sound. A *katakana* syllabary was created by taking parts of Chinese characters to represent Japanese sounds. Both of these *kana* syllabaries were made up of entirely phonetic symbols. If one could write these symbols, it was possible to write the entire sound system of Japanese. Each of these syllabaries, even in their pre-modern and nonstandard forms were comparatively easy to learn because they represented the relatively finite sounds of Japanese. This was in contrast to Chinese characters where a different character might have to be learned for virtually every word. Thus, the development of the *kana* systems eventually became a critical aspect of the spread of basic literacy among the Japanese.

The historical development of the Japanese script resulted in a multi-layered structure: first Chinese characters alone, then a complex system for "reading off" Chinese characters into Japanese, then eventually the substitution of phonetic syllabaries, derived from Chinese characters, for grammatical functions, verb endings and some vocabulary, leaving Chinese characters for most nouns and verb stems. Chinese style texts continued well into the modern period in government documents and scholarship and for other official uses. In pre-modern times, *hiragana* was thought to be for female use and the use of such characters by men was confined to private use. At the beginning of the eleventh century, there was a flourishing of aristocratic female literature as seen in the *Genji monogatari* and the *Makura no sōshi*, written almost entirely in *hiragana*. In the medieval period from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries *katakana* became largely associated with priestly writings and the writings of Buddhist sutras.

The fact that the Japanese borrowed a foreign script that linguistically was not entirely

suited to the Japanese language has bequeathed to the Japanese a certain complexity that other scripts have avoided. At the same time, however, and maybe for the same reason, the Japanese script through its diversity of characters, its historically multi-layered forms, and the association of sets of symbols with particular genders or occupations enables the Japanese script to connote all kinds of nuances and suggestions that other, simpler, scripts cannot convey.

The Development of Buddhism and Literacy in Japan

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This paper is intended to explore the link between the expansion and propagation of Japanese Buddhism from ancient times through the Middle Ages (approximately the sixth to the sixteenth centuries) and increased literacy among adherents of Buddhism.

The Advent of Buddhism and the Early Study of Buddhist Philosophy

In Japan Buddhism had influenced the national government by the early sixth century, but the Buddhist philosophy of the time was highly focused on material aspects, characterized by golden Buddha statues, pompous ceremonies, and the "miracles" that these were thought to bring about.[1]

This situation began to change around the eighth century. A number of people emerged who wanted to understand the teachings and philosophy of Buddhism. Many of these people were monks who had studied in China, and when these monks returned home to Japan they formed the core of a movement that brought a great deal of vitality to Buddhist studies. With this movement, the six schools of thought known as "Nantorokushū/Nara no Rokushū" (Hossō, Sanron, Kusha, Jōjitsu, Kegon, and Ritsu) took shape. The establishment of the Tendai and Shingon sects during the Heian Period (794-1185) eventually brought the total number of Buddhist sects in Japan to eight. The original six could be studied comprehensively at the Tōdai-ji in Nara, where new halls were continuously being built, creating an ideal situation for this group of scholar monks.

Though at first it had appeared focused on worldly matters, trends in Buddhism began to move toward spirituality and learning. Organized education and study initiatives at the powerful temples represented a manifestation of this development. For instance, Hōryū-ji, which was built by Shōtoku Taishi (574-622) in the early seventh century, functioned as an academic center as indicated by the designation, Horyuji gakumonjo (center of learning). It

[1] Hisaki Yukio, *Nihon no shūkyō* (Saimaru Shuppankai, 1971): 66-67.

is well-known that Shōtoku Taishi compiled the *Sankyō no Gisho*, which is a commentary on the *Yuimakyō*, *Shōmankyō*, and *Hokekyō* sutras. Hōryū-ji subsequently produced many more Buddhist philosophers. Other prominent temples of Nara, including Tōdai-ji, Kōfuku-ji, Tōshōdai-ji, and Saidai-ji also acted as centers of education and learning for their particular schools of thought.

Though short-lived compared to the prominent temples of Nara, Shugei Shuchi-in (828-845) offered comprehensive higher education to interested people. It was built by the Shingon sect saint Kūkai (also, Kōbō Daishi, 774-835) in Kyoto as a school providing education to both monks and lay people. In general, however, men of religion did not become involved in education for the masses until the Warring States Period (also Sengoku Period, 1467-1568) and later. Acting on a basic tenet of Mahayana Buddhism that promoted non-discrimination, Kūkai eliminated class restrictions, thus making Shugei Shuchi-in available to the common people. Education at Shugei Shuchi-in encompassed all of the schools of thought of ancient East Asia: Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. Kūkai worked to realize a flexible system whereby people did not need to adhere to any particular school of thought or academic position, i.e. they could study freely within the framework of philosophical and academic systems of the times. This can be considered a projection of the tendency of the times to respect broad-based knowledge that went beyond the constraints of Confucianism and Buddhism. This was the embodiment of Kūkai's unique philosophy, which was characterized by the intake of existing academic and philosophical systems in order to go beyond mere knowledge to completely grasp both ordinary and extraordinary elements of the human world.[2]

Buddhism During the Warring States Period and its Relation to Literacy

The primary purpose of Buddhism in ancient Japan was to ensure the happiness and perpetual control of the aristocracy and the government. However, from the twelfth through the sixteenth centuries, along with the rise of the samurai class, the common people, and various subordinate classes, Buddhism gradually became firmly rooted in both the samurai leadership class and within the masses. This was because reform was implemented not only among new sects established during the Kamakura Period (1185-1333), but also among pre-existing sects.

[2] Hisaki Yukio, "Kūkai," in *Nihon no kyōiku shisō*, ed. Inoue Hisao (Fukumura Shuppan,1979): 29-46.

The various influential sects of this period had their own individual philosophical and theoretical systems, and their tendency to try to strengthen their individual positions led to tensions. In the midst of this situation, theoretical studies in each of the sects developed, and to propagate the results of these studies, education and research institutions in the temples were established. Many of these became full-fledged schools by the end of the seventeenth century, and later developed into the precursors of modern Buddhist universities.

The leaders of the various sects of Kamakura Period Buddhism advocated reforms in traditional Buddhist practice. While they respected Buddhist teachings, they also sought new theoretical possibilities. They strived to promote their ideas in their roles as Buddhist academics and philosophers. Scholars such as Hōnen (1113-1212), Shinran (1173-1263), Dōgen (1200-1253), Nichiren (1222-1282), and Eizon (1201-1290) collected their thought in prolific writings.

Kamakura Period Buddhism presented the revolutionary teachings of Buddhism in a simple, easy-to-understand manner, directed at both the samurai and the common people, in order to gain the widest possible social influence. The more popular appeals were, however, also based on solid theoretical and philosophical foundations. In establishing a following, the various sects had to develop their own systems of order and educational programs in order to attract adherents. Literacy then became an important skill to have if one desired to attain an understanding of the essence of Buddhist teachings.

The leaders of Kamakura Buddhism devised various means to convey the essence of Buddhist teachings to the samurai and to the common folk, as these people were by no means specialists in Buddhist theory. The leaders taught their audience orally in easy-to-understand language, and they also sent letters on the teachings to adherents living in faraway places. Shinran, Nichiren, Shinkyō (?-1132), and Rennyo (1415-1499) in particular used the written word to communicate with followers, adopting flexibility on issues such as the depth of devotion and level of literacy of their audiences. In particular, they attempted to deepen faith through the exchange of simple letters with their audience, from whom they would receive questions. These letters were also believed to be circulated and copied among the people living near the recipient. An example of this is the circulation of the *ofumi* letters by Rennyo. A great number of these letters were written with the assumption that they would be widely circulated, and indeed many of them were read to large crowds

of people.[3]

Examining the letters exchanged between leaders and followers, it is clear that some rural followers pursued the practice of reading Buddhist sutras very actively. For instance, it is evident from the letters of Shinkyō of the Jishū sect, who is believed to have offered Buddhist studies by mail most enthusiastically, that the Buddhists of his region were working extremely hard to study the sutras and firmly establish their sect in the countryside.

The Jishū sect was the sect with the most significant social impact during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries as a result of being organized into a religious community under Shinkyō, the successor to the founder Ippen (1239-1289). At this time, study group centers known as *dōjōs* (seminaries) were formed around the country. Many were rustic facilities made by renovating ordinary peoples' homes, and many of these later developed into temples. Followers came together at the *dōjō* to study the sutras under the guidance of a Jishū sect monk sent from the main temple at Taima, Sagami Province in what is today Kanagawa Prefecture, and to strengthen their devotion as they gradually mastered Buddhist theoretical concepts.[4]

The sect became concerned that followers might pay too much attention to the sutras and not enough attention to the basic tenets of devotion, and so they constantly cautioned that reading sutras was not just a goal of study, but also a method for establishing devotion. For instance, the family code of conduct of an individual known as Utsunomiya-shi, who was a powerful Buddhist practitioner of the samurai class, clearly treated learning at the *dōjō* as an esteemed academic subject.[5]

Though this is not necessarily true in every case, many followers who comprised the core of the local *dōjō* were likely literate enough to read the Chinese characters in the sutras as well as the commentaries on the sutras. Some followers wrote their own interpretations of the sutras, though in some cases these were not very sophisticated and required a written inquiry to Shinkyō as to whether the interpretations were correct or not.[6]

Monks of the Jishū sect were typical of itinerant monks during the Warring States Period. They spread widely throughout the country and brought their religion to the people of both cities and villages. Naturally, these individuals had already received an organized education in the temple setting. They were therefore sufficiently literate to read and

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[3] Kinryū Shizuka, *Rennyo* (Yosikawa Kōbunkan,1997): 74-86.
[4] Ohto Yasuhiro, *Nihon chūsei kyōikushi no kenkyū* (Azusa Shuppansha, 1998): 219-248.
[5] *Ibid.,* 223-224.
[6] *Ibid*., 249-274.

understand difficult texts. These itinerant monks would live in rural villages for certain periods of time to provide literacy education to the local people.[7]

During the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries, Buddhist monks were generally knowledgeable, cultured people, and the temples where they carried out their work played a significant role as a place of learning for the children of the samurai class as well as for the masses. Temples of both the new sects of Buddhism that arose during this time and those that had existed since ancient times, were built. Some were very large and represented entire regions, others were small and humble and catered to the needs of rural villagers. Although mainly aimed at training acolytes, these temples also provided some degree of literacy education to the children of lay people, who would not become monks. Such temple education was not limited to the children of the samurai class or to the wealthiest among the common people, but also served in a limited way the needs of ordinary children in farming villages.[8]

Religious Devotion and Literacy Among the Common People of the Warring States Period

The largest and longest religious battles of the Sengoku Period, called the Ikkō-ikki, took place during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. These were armed uprisings by followers of the Ikkō-shū (the old name for the Jōdo-Shinshū sect) and grew to have significant political impact that threatened warring regional lords. The Ikkō sect clashed with Oda Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideoyoshi, Tokugawa Ieyasu, and other individuals whose power was growing toward the end of the Warring States Period. This was the time when Buddhist devotion had reached its height among ordinary people.

The Ikkō-shū followers were dedicated to voluntary support for the Hongan-ji temple, and from their actions arose the *hyakushō-no-mochitaru-kuni* ("country owned by farmers") movement in Kaga Province. The Ikkō-shū followers were the central force behind farmers who led rebellions that reflected intense social upheavals of the latter half of the Warring States Period. These rebellions were not carried out simply for the practical benefit of reducing economic pressures on the farming population. It was the larger goal of

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[7] Hisaki Yukio, "Chūsei minshū kyōiku shisetsu toshite no muradō ni tsuite," *Nihon kyōikushi kenkyū* 6 (1987): 57-69.

[8] Ohto Yasuhiro, "Chūsei shakai ni okeru kyōiku no tamensei," in *Kyōiku shakai shi*, eds. Tsujimoto Masashi and Okita Yukuji (Yamakawa Shuppansha, 2002): 65-119.

establishing a spiritual ideology supported by everyday study activities that brought them into intense conflict with the ruling classes, and was the source of a popular strength that could challenge the military power of the great warring lords.[9]

Consequently, literacy education and sutra study in *dōjō* were essential to the power and influence of the Ikkō sect. The text *Jitsugoki-shūi*, by Jitsugo, son of Rennyo, the leader of Ikkō-shū , includes introductory material by Shimozuma-Aki-Rensō, a close confidant of Rennyo during the time when he was as yet not widely known. This work was typical of the kind of study taken up by students at the *dōjō*. Rensō often made appearances at important times during the Kaga Ikkō rebellions and was called upon to negotiate with the warring lords. Little is known about his origins except that he came from a village in Echizen Province. It is believed that in the beginning he was a simple ordinary follower who could barely read or write. However, at the age of forty he began studying Japanese phonetics, and gradually learned basic Chinese characters. It was likely that there were people available to assist in such an endeavor, because literate people were a necessity in the temples. Subsequently, Rensō gradually progressed from rudimentary literacy to studying Buddhist sutras. Eventually, he was proclaimed a "man of knowledge." It is thought that he moved on to deepening his devotion after attaining understanding of the meaning behind the Buddhist teaching. As a result, Rensō became highly respected among Ikkō-shū followers and a close associate of Rennyo.

Some of the *ofumi* letters written by Rensō survive, along with drafts of the letters, religious texts, excerpts from sutras and commentaries written by Rennyo himself. These are thought to be materials prepared for Rensō's studies. Clearly, Rensō came to assume considerable influence due to the fact that he lived where the Ikkō-shū had a particularly significant presence. However, it is also reasonable to assume that his progress from the basic literacy of an ordinary follower to mastery of advanced sutra studies was a result of the educational opportunities made widely available to him at *dōjōs* in various locations.[10]

Kaō Signatures and Literacy Among Adherents of the Ikkō Sect

The Gokayama-*shū rensho-mōshisadame* is a document dating from 1552. Gokayama is a mountain-ringed region located in the five valleys surrounding a river in Etchū

[9] Ohto Yasuhiro, "Ikkō ikki o sasaeta mono," *Nihon kyōikushi kenkyū* 24 (2005): 1-32.
[10] *Ibid*., 7-8.

Province in what is now Toyama Prefecture. It has been called a "mysterious land" due to the fact that the roads leading to it become impassable in winter because of heavy snows. There were several *dōjōs* dotting the villages of Etchū Gokayama, and the network of followers of these *dōjōs* formed a "kō" (a religious association) called the "Tōka-kō." As proof of their independence from the followers of Hongan-ji described above, they eventually stopped sending cotton and textile threads to the temple. In response to instructions from the powerful temple, a representative of the followers signed the Gokayama-*shū rensho-mōshisadame,* making a pledge not to delay in sending them again.

On this document, there appear a total of eighty-seven names and signature/seals of people representing Ikkō-shū followers from the five Gokayama valley areas of Shimonashi, Togadan, Odan, Kaminashi and Akao. Among these, two or three are believed to have been made by monks, while the others are thought to be those of lay people, including individuals assumed to be regional or village headmen and a number of elders. There was no signature or seal for two of the names listed. Excluding these, there were thirty-nine *kaō* signatures and forty-six abbreviated *kaō* signatures under each of the names, in addition to a number of other marks. It is interesting to note that, among the marks made by eighty-five followers, thirty-nine, or approximately forty-five percent, are *kaō* signatures.[11]

The relationship between the *kaō* signature and literacy has been studied by Kimura Masanobu. Dr. Kimura argues that a person had to be quite literate in order to produce the *kaō* signature due to the fact that such signatures required excellent mastery of the brush.[12] While we must approach this assumption with caution, an individual would have to have mastered the brush considerably to produce the elegant designs found among the *kaō* signatures that appear in this document. This type of signature cannot be produced by simply observing and copying a pattern. Therefore we would probably not be mistaken to say that the ability to produce such a *kaō* signature reflects the ability to read and write. This document, which tells us that forty-five percent of the followers listed here were capable of producing *kaō* signatures, enables us therefore also to estimate the literacy level of the followers of Gokayama.[13]

There are other documents produced by Ikkō-shū followers that exhibit the *kaō* signature. A jointly-signed document signed by followers of the Shōman-ji in the province of Mikawa

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[11] *Ibid*., 8-12.

[12] Kimura Masanobu, "Kinsei shikiji kenkyū ni okeru shūshi ninbetsuchō no shiryō teki kanōsei," *Nihon kyōikushi kenkyū* 14 (1995): 43-64.

[13] Ohto Yasuhiro, "Ikkō ikki o sasaeta mono," *Nihon kyōikushi kenkyū* 24 (2005): 8-12.

in what is now Aichi Prefecture, also contains a number of *kaō* signatures made by Ikkō-shū followers of the farmer class. Though there may have been differences among regions, this document shows that the large number of *kaō* on the Gokayama example is not an exception.[14]

We can conclude from the above that among the Ikkō-shū followers who studied together at *dōjōs* in order to establish devotion to the religion of Buddhism, there were likely people who had achieved a high level of literacy, though there may have been qualitative differences among them. In addition, there were also followers who, though lacking the ability to read the texts properly, were able to understand the content through having the texts read to them. This opportunity may have enabled these people to become literate over time as well.

Conclusion

Buddhism is a religion based on a complex metaphysical system. To convey the essence of Buddhism, there needed to be various levels of sutra study geared toward everyone from scholar monks to lay people, and each level of study required a different level of literacy. The success of the spread of Buddhism required that sutra study be available to ordinary people, and thus many opportunities to become literate were created. As a result of this trend, religious studies provided diverse educational opportunities. In this way, Buddhism helped create a solid educational foundation for both the samurai classes and for common people. The Jesuits, who taught Christianity in Japan during the Warring Sates Period, felt they needed to build a great number of schools to compete with this system.[15] The spread of Buddhism in Japan therefore had an impact on literacy among the common people, which can be measured by to some extent b y signatures on documents.

[14] Ibid., 12.
[15] Ohto Yasuhiro, "Chūsei shakai ni okeru kyōiku no tamensei," in *Kyōiku shakai shi*, eds. Tsujimoto Masashi and Okita Yukuji (Yamakawa Shuppansha, 2002): 113-115.

The Ability to Sign by Farmers of the Ōmi Region from the Fourteenth to the Early Seventeenth Century

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To what levels of literacy did the farming population of Japan reach during the early modern period (early seventeenth to mid nineteenth centuries)? How extensive was popular literacy before that? What methods can we use to ascertain the levels they reached? These are important questions that have not been adequately answered. This essay suggests some approaches to these questions by investigating the large number of signatures (*kaō* and abbreviated *kaō*) used by farmers to certify their names on a wide variety of local documents from the fourteenth to the early seventeenth century. The assumption is made here that those who could validate their names on documents with a cipher (*kaō*), which required considerable dexterity with a brush, were literate beyond the mere signing of their names. Those who used abbreviated ciphers, sometimes only simple circles, were almost certainly less proficient.[1]

Following the Kan'ei Period (1624-1644) confirmation marks made on religious inquiry registers (*shūmon aratame-chō*) tended to be seals (*hanko*), which give us no clues to literacy skills at all. However, before the mid-seventeenth century confirmation marks were usually made by a personal mark of some kind--a cipher, an abbreviated cipher, or a variety of other marks. These personal marks of confirmation are the basis for the research reported here.

This paper estimates percentages of literate villagers (including some merchants and artisans) in the Ōmi region by analyzing ciphers and abbreviated ciphers appearing on village documents from the following sources: *Katsuragawa Myōōin monjo*, *Ōhara Kannon-ji monjo*, *Iwakura Ebisu-kō Sekkō monjo* of Ōmi Hachiman.[2]

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[1] See Kimura Masanobu's contribution in these pages as well as Rubinger, *Popular Literacy in Early Modern Japan*, Chapter 2 for further discussion of the meanings of these marks.

[2] Use has also been made of compilations of these documents, such as Murayama Shūichi, comp., *Katsuragawa Myōōin shiryō* (Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1964), Shiga Ken Kyōiku Iinkai, ed., *Ōhara Kannonji monjo* (Shiga-ken komonjo kenkyū chōsa hōkokusho 2, March 1975) and Ōmi Hachiman-shi Kyōiku Iinkai and Ōmi Hachiman Shiritsu Kyōdō Shiryōkan, eds., *Sekkō monjo kaidoku sho (1985)*.

Percentages of Cipher Use Among Farmers: Katsuragawa Myōōin Documents

There are 36 separate documents showing cipher and abbreviated cipher use as certifying marks among farmers in the Katsuragawa Myōōin materials. There are other marks used as well, including stem stamps (*fude jiku*), seals (*hanko*), nail prints (*tsume-in*), circles (*maru-in*), blood marks (*keppan*), and blanks (*muki*).

Among the 36 documents 3 were from the fourteenth century, 4 from the sixteenth century, an overwhelming 28 were from the seventeenth century, and only one was from the eighteenth century. Of the seventeenth century materials the vast majority were from the Keichō Period (1596-1615). Looking first at the fourteenth century documents, 3 persons were able to certify their names with a full cipher, whereas 60 used abbreviated ciphers, 13 used nail marks (*tsume-in*), and 2 names were not validated by any mark at all. No one used either a stem stamp or a seal. That means that on these fourteenth century documents very few or 4 percent of those certifying their names used *kaō* and were probably fully literate. The overwhelming majority or 77 percent used abbreviated *kaō* and might have had some marginal literacy because they used a brush, 16.5 percent used nail marks and were almost certainly illiterate and 2.5 percent did not make any mark and were probably illiterate.

Looking at the four documents from the sixteenth century, 4 names were certified with a cipher (15.4 percent of the total), 9 used abbreviated ciphers (34.6 percent), 10 used stem stamps (38.5 percent), 1 used a seal (3.8 percent), and 2 were blank (7.7 percent). There were no nail marks. These materials suggest a small core of fully literate farmers (about 15 percent), more than double that percentage who indicated marginal literacy by the use of abbreviated ciphers (about 35 percent), and the highest percentage indicating hardcore illiteracy as indicated by the use of stem stamps (the stump of the brush used as a seal). Recall that seals themselves give us no clues whatsoever about the literacy of the user and blanks are difficult to assess.

Looking at the seventeenth century which had many more documents at 28, cipher users were 26 (9 percent of the total), abbreviated ciphers were 222 (76 percent), stem stamp users were 6 (2 percent), seals were used by 5 (2 percent), and 2 used nail marks (1 percent). There were 30 names not certified (10 percent). If we include the blanks the total is 291. Most telling here is the existence of a core group of literate farmers at 10 percent

and the overwhelming percentage (76 percent) at rudimentary literacy levels as indicated by the use of abbreviated ciphers. There is a very dramatic falling off of clear and direct indicators of illiteracy in the seventeenth century--only 2 percent stem stamps, 1 percent nail marks, with some among the 10 percent blanks who might be considered illiterate.

In the eighteenth century, we have only a single document with too few names to make any generalizations about. There were only 7 names, one used a *kaō*, 2 used abbreviated *kaō*, and 4 used seals. If anything can be said it is the rise in the use of seals in the second half of the seventeenth century.

From these materials it is clear that from the fourteenth century into the early seventeenth century the number of farmers who were fully literate (could write a cipher) appeared to be quite few, but remained around 10 percent. The overwhelming numbers of farmers certified documents with abbreviated ciphers that may indicate some rudimentary literacy. The number who did not certify their names on documents was not large but it is important to try to discover the reasons for the blank spaces. This is because among the abbreviated ciphers users were those who made simple circles or triangles so it does not appear that ability or inability to write characters could have been the issue. Thus for those who didn't even make some simple design and left spaces following their names, we need to consider reasons other than illiteracy. Also following the Kan'ei period (after 1644) the use of seals among farmers became commonplace but in the documents used here they are still relatively scarce. In the eighteenth century the use of seals becomes much more numerous.

If we look closely at one document from the Katsuragawa Myōōin shiryō, dated 22nd Day of the 6th Month of Bunpō 2 (1318) and entitled "Katsuragawa jūnin nado kishōmon" we can see the following: Among 57 names listed there were 2 who used a cipher to certify their names (3.5 percent of the total), 44 used abbreviated ciphers (77 percent), 9 used nail marks (16 percent), and there were 2 blanks (3.5 percent). Clearly only a very few were fully literate but a very large percentage, over 80 percent, could manipulate a brush to some degree as indicated by the percentage of cipher and abbreviated cipher users.

In 1318 the number of farmers who could write characters as indicated by the use of ciphers was very few, only 3.5 percent, whereas over 70 percent may have had some rudimentary skill as indicated by the use of abbreviated ciphers. The form of the abbreviated ciphers, as in most documents, was mainly a simple circle. But one of the reasons why the Katsuragawa Myōōin materials are so fascinating and suggestive for

scholars of literary is that among them are many other rarely seen marks such as katakana "ki," "x," crosses, stick figures and others created individually by the writers, sometimes singly, sometimes in combination to distinguish individuals from one another. The diversity of marks is very great. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper, it is essential to explore further the meaning and significance of these unique marks. It should be remembered that the actual documents as well as the names of villagers were apparently written by the same hand, but the confirming marks were obviously made by individual farmers in very creative ways.

Among other Katsuragawa Myōōin documents we can see an even greater diversity of individual validation marks than in the "Katsuragawa jūnin nado kishōmon" of 1318. There are large numbers of triangles, squares, horizontal lines, and combinations of these as well as the more common circles written individually in outsized proportions on the documents. It would appear that from the late medieval into the early modern period (fourteenth to early sixteenth centuries) it was imperative to certify documents in an individually distinguishable way. But this was not done by signing with a cipher. It was done rather by using abbreviated ciphers of freely created designs in a variety of combinations in order to make a highly individualized design. In making a mark that distinguished themselves from others on these documents we must ask why it was done this way and not with something closer to a signature like a cipher? That is, why didn't certifiers validate their names using some abbreviated form of the Chinese characters in their names? This should be one topic for further research.

Cipher Use of Farmers From the Ōhara Kannonji Documents

The same procedure was followed with the Ōhara Kannoji documents as with the materials above. That is to say, ciphers, abbreviated ciphers, stem stamps, seals, nail marks, circles, blood marks used as to certify names on documents were examined and percentages of use of different marks calculated. There are 15 separate documents in the Ōhara Kannoji materials. Among them were 4 from the fourteenth century, 5 from the fifteenth century, and 6 from the sixteenth century.

On the fourteenth century documents 23 ciphers (57.5 percent) were used, 16 abbreviated ciphers (40 percent), and one name was left blank, for a total of 40. There were no stem stamps, seals, or nail marks. This is a very high percentage of cipher users for this early period and suggestions that the names were those of priests or village leaders and not

ordinary farmers. Similarly on the 5 fifteenth century documents there were 44 cipher users (55.7 percent), 20 abbreviated ciphers (25 percent), 10 nail marks (13 percent), and 5 blanks (6 percent) for a total of 79. There were no stem stamps or seals. In the sixteenth century documents there were 5 ciphers (10 percent), 21 abbreviated ciphers (44 percent), 2 nail marks (4 percent), and 20 names (42 percent) without certifying marks for a total of 48 names. The absence of certifying marks on a high percentage of these names is unusual. Perhaps the imperative to validate these documents was not as great as it would later come to be. The context in which these documents were created, therefore, calls for further explanation.

There are two additional documents from Ōhara Kannoji shiryō. In the document dated 21st Day of 4th Month of Keian 2 (1369) entitled, "Ōmi no kuni Ibukiyamazumi Yamagadera uke--" there are 22 ciphers and no abbreviated ciphers, stem stamps, seals, nail marks or blanks. All validating marks were done with ciphers. Judging by the names some could have been priests. From the low percentages of cipher users on other documents, it is difficult to believe that these confirmation marks were made by farmers unless they were village leaders. Again it is necessary to do more research and to uncover the circumstances under which these documents were drawn up and who the signers were, for the high percentage of ciphers is very unusual.

In the other example, dated 15th Day of the 6th Month of Eikyō 10 (1438), and titled "Gosengū sanka dōshin kishōmon no koto," there are 43 ciphers users (73%), 4 abbreviated ciphers users (7 percent), 10 nail marks (17 percent), 2 blanks, and no stem stamp users, for a total of 59. Again, this is such a high percentage of cipher users that it suggests the signers were no ordinary group of village farmers. Who these signers were and what the document is meant to convey needs to be further investigated.

Percentages of Cipher Users in Ōmi Hachiman no Iwakura Ebisu-kō Sekkō monjo

There are 7 separate documents in the Sekkō monjo in the possession of the Iwakura Ebisu-kō. Four of them are dated from the late sixteenth to the mid-seventeenth centuries. The dates of the other three are unknown. In all of them there were 41 cipher users, 73 abbreviated cipher users, 6 stem stamps, 3 seals, and 16 names without certifying marks, for a total of 139. If we leave out the seals and use 136 as the total, the percentage of cipher users amounts to 30 percent of that total. If we look at one of the documents, entitled "Okite sadamuru no koto" (date unknown) from the *Sekkō monjo* there were 2 cipher users,

24 abbreviated cipher users, one stem stamp, 1 seal, and 14 names not validated for a total of 42. Again leaving out the seal for a total of 41, we get 4.9 percent cipher users, 58.5 percent abbreviated cipher users, 2.4 percent stem stamps, and 34 percent lacking certification. Here the percentage of cipher users is comparatively low and the percentage of blanks quite high.

Another example is entitled, "Usu no yadan okime no koto," dated 26th Day, 1st Month of Manji 3 (1660). In this case there were 13 ciphers, 20 abbreviated ciphers, 2 seals, and 1 name not validated for a total of 36. Thus ciphers were 36 percent of the total, abbreviated ciphers 55.5 percent, seals 5.5 percent, and blanks 2.7 percent.

Conclusion

This report is meant to suggest some patterns in the percentage of cipher users among farmers from the middle of the fourteenth century into the early seventeenth century based on personal marks of certification on village documents that have never been looked at before from this perspective, such as *Katsuragawa Myōōin monjo*, *Ōhara Kannonji monjo*, and the *Iwakura Ebisu-kō Sekkō monjo* of *Ōmi Hachiman*.

First and foremost, the evidence in the documents studied here suggests the very early, fourteenth century, existence of literacy in some farming areas of Japan. In the Ōmi region in the period under investigation the percentage of cipher use was not very high in the early years but the numbers of cipher users generally increases by the seventeenth century. In the early years in the Ōmi region the percentage of cipher users was much lower generally than the percentage of abbreviated ciphers. In the seventeenth century, however, the percentage of abbreviated cipher use goes down and the percentage of cipher use increases, suggesting higher qualities of literacy. Stem stamps and nail marks, suggesting hardcore illiteracy were low and there were always blanks, in some cases more than a few. The circumstances and meanings of these blanks are not yet clear and require further investigation. It may be that certification of documents was not always as imperative or consistently enforced as it would come to be under the Tokugawa regime.

We have assumed throughout that cipher users had rather extensive literacy skills whereas abbreviated cipher users may have had some rudimentary skills with a brush but not to the extent of cipher users. Thus, our findings that abbreviated ciphers were far more prevalent throughout most of the time period surveyed, and second, that they declined with cipher usage increasing in the seventeenth century, is not surprising.

Finally, there is a need for greater context in the analysis of personal confirmation marks on documents. We need to know much more about how cipher usage correlates with the class structure of farming villages during the transition from medieval to early modern periods. We need to know much more about the incentives and motivations for literacy in the earlier periods and how customs and practices relating to literacy were carried over from earlier times. We also need to know more about the documents themselves. What were the purposes of the documents under review here? Were all members of a village required to certify them or only a few? What accounts for the high rates of cipher usage particularly on the Ōhara Kannoji documents? This preliminary report has raised more questions than it has provided answers but it is the hope that by setting down some of the data from these unique documents replete with evocative farmer markings that others may be inspired to pursue the many problems and questions that arise from them about the nature of rural society at the onset of early modern society in Japan.

The Calculation of Literacy Rates Using *Ninbetsuchō* with a Focus on *Kaō*

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In recent years, the field of modern history has focused on literacy rates in modern society, and there have been numerous research reports concerning the various characteristics of a literate society. There is a great deal to learn from European countries regarding the social significance of the spread of literacy. The work of Lawrence Stone[1] on educational history is well known. The research methodology of R.S. Schofield[2] utilizes signatures found on marriage documents as the basic data for estimating literacy. The assumption that having the ability to sign one's name means one is literate (taking into considering various qualifications based on this assumption), has made possible revolutionary advances in the compilation of statistics on literacy in contrast to earlier less empirical methodologies.

This paper, building on previous research, focuses on new historical data on literacy rates from records such as *shūmon aratame chō* (also *shūshi ninbetsu aratame chō*) hereafter referred to as "religious affiliation registers." Since affiliation with a Buddhist temple was required of every inhabitant of every village and town in Tokugawa Japan, these data were commonly used in early modern times to maintain population records and as a means of banning of Christianity. Either a signature or personal seal was required as a means of confirming individual identity on these records. In the early seventeenth century in particular, there are a number of such signatures in the form of ciphers (*kaō*), and these may prove an excellent means of assessing literacy. Through an analysis of ciphers found in the religious affiliation registries in the town of Hirado-machi in

[1] Lawrence Stone, "Literacy and Education in England 1640-1900," Past and Present 42 (1969): 69-139.
[2] R.S.Schofield, "The Measurement of Literacy in Pre-Industrial England," in Jack Goody ed., *Literacy in Traditional Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968): 311-325.

Nagasaki and the town of Rokkaku-machi in Kyoto, we can calculate literacy rates and discuss the implications as well as the limitations of these calculations.

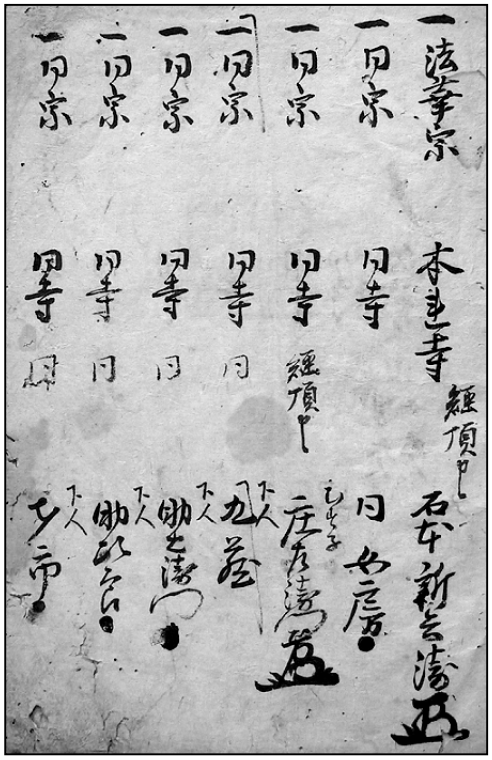
The Religious Affiliation/Population Registries and Calculations of Literacy

Nagasaki was founded as a port city in 1570. There were six districts formed under city planning initiatives, one of which was Hirado-machi. However, the town only developed into a full-scale trading port when the island known as Dejima was built as a trading station, originally for the Portuguese in 1636 and the Dutch from 1641. Following the Shimabara Rebellion, which occurred in 1637 (the approximate date of the materials used for this study) religious affiliation/population registries were used to discover and convert Christians within the local population.

Hirado-machi is today part of Manzai-machi, located near Edo-machi, the site of the prefectural government in the city of Nagasaki. Edo-machi was the place where the bridge to Dejima was situated, making it the city's "window to trade." Due to its location, Hirado-machi became part of the center of Nagasaki's commercial district.

Among the religious affiliation/population registries of Hirado-machi, there are currently a total of seven documents from which we can calculate literacy rates, dating from 1634, 1635, 1637, 1641, 1642, 1651, and 1659.[3] Photographs and analysis of the oldest extant registry, dated 1634, can be found on the following page.

[3] These documents are housed at Kyushu University.



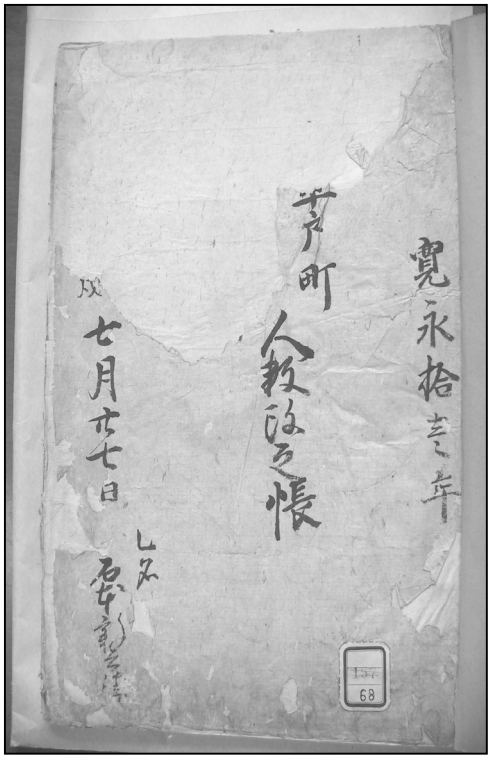


Photo 2 **Photo 1**

***Ninbetsuchō* (1634)**

Shown in Photo 2 are the signatures of Ishimoto Shinbei, an official of Hirado-machi, and all the members of his family. The point of interest here are the personal marks that follow each of their names. For instance the confirming marks that follow Shinbei and his son Shozaemon, are *kaō* signatures, but the names of the women and servants are followed by thumb prints or stem stamps (*fude jikuin*) which are made with the blunt end of the brush and do not require literacy. We suggest here that there were two individuals capable of writing letters or symbols with a brush, and eight people incapable of writing anything. If this supposition is accurate, this particular group was 20 percent literate and 80 percent illiterate.

Table 1 (next page) shows that, among twenty-three signatures of heads of households in Hirado-machi in 1634, a high rate of 91 percent feature confirmation ciphers. Based on the hypothesis mentioned above, the overwhelming percentage of signatures by heads of households was made by

literate individuals. Conversely, looking at the marks made by servants, only seven of a total of thirty-seven (19 percent) validated their names with *kaō* .

In Table 2 we examine the data for those who rented their homes in the same manner. Here, of the total of twenty-six people, only ten or 38 percent used ciphers. This result differs significantly from that of the homeowners, as one might expect.

Table 1

Kaō Rates of Homeowners in Hirado-machi, 1634

	HseHead Signature	Wife	Son	Daughter	Relative	Servant (M)	Servant (F)	unknown
Kaō	21 (91%)	0	6	0	2	7 (19%)	0	7
Seal	2	15	11	19	5	30	56	43
Nothing	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sum	26	15	17	19	7	37	56	50

Twenty-six households are included on this table. “Seal” includes simplified *kaō*.

Table 2

Kaō Rates of Tenants in Hirado-machi, 1634

	Hse Head Signature	Wife	Son	Daughter	Relative	Servant (M)	Servant (F)	Unknown
Kaō	10(38%)	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Seal	15	21	5	3	0	0	1	31
Nothing	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sum	26	21	5	0	0	0	0	32

Twenty-six households are included on this table. “Seal” includes simplified *kaō*.

Rokkaku-machi was located in the present-day Rokkaku-sagaru, Shin-machi-dōri, Nakagyo-ku, Kyoto. As of the middle of the Muromachi Period, the area was inhabited by Gionsha-zashōnin tradesmen and wealthy merchants. In modern times as well, it has been home to businessmen and powerful merchants such as the Mitsui family. In 1635, Kyoto local officials required a *nanban kishōmon*

(apostasy oaths) as part of initiatives to wipe out Christians. Samples from 1635 and 1637, taken together, indicate that the document was of the *kishōmon* variety.[4] Because the religious affiliation registry document did not yet exist, there is no temple notation on the documents, distinguishing these documents from those found at Hirado-machi. However, the presence of the confirmation mark following each name is the same as for the Hirado-machi documents, and so we have attempted to compile statistics on them in the same manner as the Hirado documents.

Table 3

Kaō Rates of Homeowners in Rokkaku-machi ,1635

	Head Signature	Wife	Son	Daughter	Relative	Servant (M)	Servant (F)	Unknown
Kaō	19(79%)	0	9	0	8	26	2	0
Seal	6	17	10	17	20	34	61	0
Nothing	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sum	24	19	19	17	28	60	63	0

Table 4

Kaō rates of Tenants in Rokkaku-machi , 1635

	Head Signature	Wife	Son	Daughter	Relative	Servant (M)	Servant (F)	Unknown
Kaō	6(42%)	0	0	0	6	5	0	0
Seal	8	13	8	12	6	6	25	0
Nothing	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sum	14	14	8	12	12	11	25	0

[4] These documents belong to Kyoto City Historical Archives.

Based on the example from the Rokkaku section of Kyoto, among the twenty-four signatures made by heads of households (except for widowed individuals), nineteen, or 79 percent were *kaō* signatures. In the tenant class, only six, or 42 percent, of fourteen people were literate. Looking at a document from 1637, nineteen of the twenty-six people of the homeowner class (73 percent), and twelve of the fourteen tenants (85 percent) were literate. Looking at the rate of *kaō* signatures alone, the tenants surpass the homeowner class. However, over this two-year period, there appears to have been considerable relocating going on. For example, one household from the earlier 1635 does not appear, and there were three additional households including one that had moved from the tenant to the house owner class. In fact, only four of the original fifteen households still existed. This may help explain the apparent anomaly.

Issues in Assessing Literacy Rates Using Religious Affiliation Registers

The Religious Affiliation Register is considered an extremely useful tool in the sense that the names of all residents are noted on it. Among other types of documents used as signature data sources through the present time, including various kinds of *kishōmon* , none have exhibited signatures or seals for all of the residents at the same time. Thus it is nearly impossible to estimate literacy rates for an entire population without a historical document such as the Religious Affiliation Register. The possibility of deducing literacy rates, based on the highly accurate figures found on these registers, is a revolutionary development.

Nevertheless, there are several problems related to literacy assessment using the Religious Affiliation Registers from Nagasaki and Kyoto as has been done here. First there is the issue of defining literacy in the Japanese context. One characteristic of the Japanese language is that it has three types of characters. In addition to the phonetic writing symbols of *hiragana* and *katakana*, it also utilizes *kanji* or Chinese characters. In addition, in pre-modern times, the use of non-standard characters was extremely common, and the reading and writing of *kana* could be as complicated as the use of Chinese characters. On top of this, there were various writing styles including the *kaisho* printed form and *gyōsho* cursive style. In light of the complexity of the script itself, it is extremely difficult to determine precisely an individual's level of literacy. Strictly speaking, the only

thing that can truly be determined with certainly from the *kaō* signatures on the Religious Affiliation registers is the *kaō* signature rate.

Second, we must consider the significance of the ability to make a *kaō* signature. Is this ability in itself indicative of whether one can write and does it prove that one is literate? Before considering this issue, it is necessary to take a brief look at the form of the *kaō* signature. The majority of *kaō* signatures validating names that appear in the Religious Affiliation register of 1634 are of the *Mincho-tai* style. These are signatures characterized by various simple designs between two roughly parallel upper and lower lines. Some appear without an upper line, but virtually all, with only a few minor exceptions, feature the lower line. Ciphers on other registers through 1659 show the same characteristics. Although it is impossible to accurately decipher the *kaō* signature, it is believed that, in some cases, the upper portion represents part of the person's name. The *Mincho-tai* style *kaō* signature, which features the upper and lower two-line style, was used by Tokugawa Ieyasu in the early modern era, and this became the basic style of the samurai during the Tokugawa period. Its use also spread among the townspeople of Nagasaki early in the seventeenth century.

Unfortunately, there are no documents available at this time that can prove directly whether or not being able to sign with a cipher meant that an individual could actually write. However, producing a *kaō* signature required significant ability to manipulate the brush, and even though the question of what level of reading and writing ability makes a person "literate" is open to discussion, it is reasonable to assume that people capable of an elegant cipher were capable of a significant level of writing. Because in pre-modern Japan reading and writing were taught simultaneously, it is further suggested that an ability to write presumed the ability to read as well. The abbreviated or simplified *kaō* signature is, however another matter. There are numerous types of abbreviated signatures, including some extremely simple ones consisting of combinations of circles and other symbols. It is highly questionable whether some of these can truly be called *kaō* because they lack the elegance and dexterity that marks the real thing. Thus it is very dubious as to whether the writer of an abbreviated cipher can be considered literate.

The third issue to consider is whether even if we determine that the cipher writers on the Religious Affiliation Registers are literate, do we conclude that

those who did not produce *kaō* were necessarily illiterate? Looking at the registry of Nagasaki for the year 1634, it was noted that more than 90 percent of the heads of households' signatures were ciphers, and all of the wives' certification marks were either thumb prints or stem stamps, both suggesting illiteracy.

Examining other Religious Affiliation Registers in Nagasaki as well, none exhibit any *kaō* signatures signed by women, and there were only two seals placed by wives. It seems doubtful, however, that the wives of powerful merchants who had many servants, such as Ishimoto Shinbei, were incapable of reading and writing. There is room for discussion here because *kaō* signatures were made by women from roughly the same period on apostasy oaths (*nanban kishōmon*) from Rokkaku-cho, Kyoto, discussed below. In any case, it is impossible to make a certain determination that stem stamps or thumb marks necessarily meant that a person was illiterate.

The fourth issue is that of age. We can arrive at a tentative literacy rate if we divide the number of *kaō* used in a given year by that year's general population. However, there is a limitation with this figure since the general population figures include everyone from newborns to the elderly and presumably there will be some at either extreme of the age spectrum who cannot reasonably be expected to read or write. But if we do not consider the age factor, the statistical figures we arrive at will be unrealistic.

The fifth and final issue is that of the *hanko* or seals, which because they are carved and not written indicate nothing about the user's level of literacy. Here we would like to examine Table 2, which is a list of tenants**.** Among the twenty-five marks on the document, only ten were *kaō* signatures. The document also contained eight seals. If we look only at the rate of *kaō* signatures, we can conclude that there is a difference in literacy rates between the homeowners and tenant classes, but to the extent that the use of seals obscures literacy rates, the difference we observe here is devoid of meaning**.**

The newest document used for this research is a Nagasaki document dating from 1659 showing a list of homeowners. Comparing the list of the homeowner class from the document of 1634, the oldest document (Table 1), the number of *kaō* signatures clearly falls, while the number of personal seals (*hanko*) increases. While in 1634 twenty-one of twenty-three people signed with ciphers, only eleven of twenty-three people (excluding widows) signed with ciphers just twenty-five

years later. Conversely, in 1634, only two people paired their *kaō* signature with a seal, while twelve people used only seals in 1659—a dramatic increase.

In 1634, only a few people of the tenant class used personal seals, but twenty-five years later its use had spread to the homeowner class and, as a result, the usage of *kaō* had fallen. The literate class would have likely expanded, barring a major event, and it is highly unlikely that the literacy rate would have fallen, so a fall in the *kaō* signature rate would not necessarily point to a shrinking of the literate class.

The existence of documents like those of Nagasaki and Kyoto, showing the use of ciphers by villagers and townspeople during this time is relatively small. The examples of Nagasaki and Kyoto show a rapid switch to the *hanko* over the 1630s and 1640s. After 1650, assessing literacy rates by personal marks, such as ciphers, on Religious Affiliation registers or other documents, becomes extremely problematic because of the extensive use of personal seals.

Conclusion

This paper has suggsted the possibility of assessing literacy rates using *kaō* signatures found on Religious Affiliation registers. Our research clearly indicates that 80-90 percent of the homeowner class in Nagasaki and Kyoto in the 1630s was literate. In Kyoto the tenant class was as literate as the homeowner class. The fact that literacy rates have been derived from Religious Affiliation Registers, despite serious issues of interpretation, is highly significant in the field of literacy research and will hopefully stimulate others to pursue the implications.

Ōraimono in Women's Literacy and Education During the Edo Period

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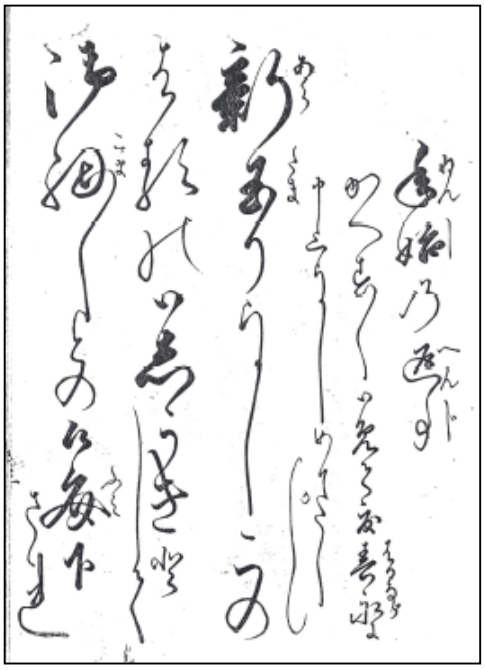
These days, *ōraimono* usually refer to textbooks that were used at home or at writing schools (often called *terakoya* but more properly termed *tenaraisho*) of the early modern (Edo) era. The term *ōrai* means an exchange of correspondence both sent and received. The term *ōraimono* can be originally traced back to elementary textbooks (such as the *Meigō ōrai* and *Higashiyama ōrai*) written around the eleventh century, which were compilations of model *ōrai*.[1] At the beginning of the Edo period (1603-1868), many textbooks no longer took the form of compilations of letters. They were still called *ōraimono*, but now the expression was used as a general term for elementary textbooks and elementary teaching materials at writing schools. Rudimentary training focused on improving reading and writing techniques and comprehending the meaning of sentences. Unlike today's mass classes where all students learn using the same textbooks, in the Edo period learning consisted largely of one-on-one training. Typically, a teacher would write sample texts for each child depending on when they had started school, how old they were when they started, and their individual learning levels. Accordingly, *ōraimono* were teaching materials from which teachers made selections for individualized instruction.

Places of learning for commoners in early modern Japan were not limited to *tenaraisho* and other types of private schools. *Ōraimono* had a wide range of venues and uses. Occasionally, *ōraimono* were purchased so that parents could teach their children at home, or for their children to learn by themselves. Occasionally teachers or other acquaintances would present them to children as gifts. Some people would use them for self-study in their later years, others would keep one at hand for life, using it as the need arose. Still others might give one to their daughter when she married into another family. All in all, about 7,000 types of *ōraimono* were published throughout the early modern era.

[1] See Ishikawa Matsutaro, " Kodai-chūsei no ōrai " in *Ōraimono no seiritsu to tenkai* (Tokyo: Yūshōdō Shuppan, 1988): 3-21

Jun-kanbun-tai for Men



Wabun-tai for Women

Fig. 1

Types of *Ōraimono* for Women

One of the distinctive features of literacy in Japan in the early modern era was that written characters used by women were different from those used by men. Women used *wabun-tai*, which was a mixture of mostly *kana* characters with a sprinkling of *kanji* characters; and men used *jun-kanbun-tai*, which used predominantly *kanji* characters (see Fig. 1 above). As a consequence, in the early modern era, writing techniques and textbooks were developed that were particular to each gender. This meant that there were some 1,200 types of *ōraimono* in existence just for women.[2] *Ōraimono* for women can be classified into the following categories depending on their content: *kyōkun-kei* (precepts), *shōsoku-kei* (letters), *shakai-kei* (social customs), *chiiku-kei* (training the mind) and *gappon-kei* (comprehensive). *Kyōkun-kei* expounded mostly on the morals, discipline, and mental readiness necessary for real life. *Shōsoku-kei* were compilations of sample letters for women[3]. *Shakai-kei* collected writings about social customs and events as well as

[2] See, for example, Ishikawa Ken and Ishikawa Matsutarō, *Nihon kyōkasho taikei ōraihen*, 15 (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1973).

[3] See, for example, Amano Haruko, "Onna bunshokei ōrai no henshū keishiki naiyō to sono igi," in

worthwhile pursuits into materials for teaching. *Chiiku-kei* were comprised of educational materials from such fields as geography and industry. *Gappon-kei* included selections from the other *ōraimono* types for women, and added to them various articles and illustrations related to women's lives. Of these five styles of *ōraimono* for women, the two that were most widely disseminated were the *kyōkun-kei* and *shōsoku-kei* styles.

Kyōkun-kei Ōraimono for Women

The *kyōkun-kei* style focused mostly on the morals, discipline, and the mental attitudes necessary for real life. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, they were edited into simple, short sentences, and scores of them were published as textbooks for writing schools. The most representative of these are *Onna Imagawa*, *Onna jitsugokyō*, *Onna dōjikyō* and *Onna daigaku*. Although each of these borrowed the names of *ōraimono* that were originally disseminated for males, namely *Imagawa*, *Jitsugokyo*, *Dōjikyō* and *Daigaku*, they became *kyōkun-kei ōraimono* for women and completely different in substance.

A Page from *Onna daigaku*

Fig. 2

The most famous of the *kyōkun-kei ōraimono* for women is the *Onna daigaku*. Ever since *Onna daigaku takarabako* was published in 1716, various versions of *Onna daigaku* have been published in various arrangements, and they have all been best sellers.[4] Figure 2 shows a page from *Onna daigaku*. Since it is a textbook for writing practice, the characters are written in large fonts.

The main body of *Onna daigaku* is comprised of nineteen provisions. The essential messages of each of the sections are as follows:

- Since it is a woman's destiny to join her husband's family after marrying, education from her parents is important to prevent her from becoming egotistical.
- Virtue in a woman is more valued than beauty. Compliant, principled, chaste,

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Nihon no kyōiku shi gaku, 32 (Nihon Kyōiku Shi Gakkai, 1989): 4-15.

[4] See, for example, Ishikawa Matsutarō, *Onna daigaku shū* (Tokyo, Heibonsha, 1977).

benevolent and quiet are the preferred qualities in women.

- From an early age, a girl must uphold the distinctions between men and women.
- Her husband's home must be a woman's home. Being dismissed from the family into which she has married as a consequence of marital divorce strays from the path of a woman, and is an embarrassment for life. There are seven causes leading to a woman being divorced from her husband's home: disobeying her parents-in-law, being unable to bear children, lewdness, jealousy, having serious illness, gossip, and pilfering.
- A woman must be more dutiful to her husband's parents than to her own.
- A woman must regard her husband as her master, and must obey him as Heaven itself.
- A woman must respect her husband's siblings.
- A woman must not be jealous of her husband.
- A woman must be prudent in what she says, and must not speak ill of others.
- A woman must not neglect her work as a wife; she must show restraint with tea and alcohol; she must not observe *kabuki* performances, ballads, *jōruri* narratives or other such diversions; and, until she is forty years of age, she must not attend shrines, temples or other places that attract many people.
- A woman must not believe or be deluded by the words of a shaman.
- A woman must practice frugality in keeping with her own position, and she must manage her household well.
- A woman must avoid familiarity with young men, such as her husband's relatives, his friends, or his employees.
- A woman's dress must be clean and modest.
- A woman shall give preference to her husband's relatives over her own parent's home. She must not leave the house or present gifts to others without her husband's permission.
- A woman must hold her husband's parents in higher esteem than her own, and she must be dutiful to them.
- Even if a woman's household has servants in its employ, she must not shirk her duties. She must also endure hardships and labor.
- A woman must use her servants well.
- Females are inferior to males, and are afflicted with the five evil infirmities. A woman must abase herself and serve her husband in everything she does.

Onna daigaku was a textbook that taught the above precepts through the practice of reading and writing characters.

The Philosophy Underlying Education for Women in the Early Modern Era

The philosophy behind education for women in the modern era was initially developed from the following two ideologies:

- Educational thought that emphasized cultivation of emotional discipline and personal appearance, carrying on traditions from the Middle Ages;
- Educational thought influenced by Confucianism and the *Jokunsho (Lessons for Women)* from China.

At first, the two ideologies were combined, but gradually, educational philosophy for women developed a strong bias toward the second line of thought. In the early modern era, society was intent on establishing a family system based on the "centralized feudalism" of the *bakuhan* system. Consequently, education attempted to instill in young women the ethical foundations and mental attitudes appropriate to nurture them as women suited to society at that time. Beginning with the previously mentioned *Onna daigaku*, *kyōkun-kei ōraimono* for women also served as textbooks that reflected the political objectives of the state. As a consequence, an ideal image of how women should behave, based on the Confucian ideologies of feudal policy-makers, was portrayed in *Onna daigaku* and other such compilations of moral lessons. It is necessary to point out, however, that it is unclear whether the female image portrayed in *Onna daigaku* was, in fact, the image commonly acknowledged as the ideal during the Edo period.

We must keep in mind that the education of women during the Edo period varied considerably depending on the social status of a woman. The female image portrayed in the *kyōkun-kei ōraimono* for women is the image of women based on the ideology of male dominance maintained by the feudal class system. This is particularly relevant to the status, roles, and ethical training of women in the samurai class. In contrast, the educational philosophy for women in the common classes – in particular, women in the middle and upper tiers of the commoner classes – had to take into consideration that while such women had a status lower than their husbands and other men, in real life they were required to exercise skills in managing the family business, and to take command at ceremonial and social occasions. As a consequence, it was inevitable that the cultural knowledge of women from the non-elite classes would be different from that of women in the samurai leadership class. While it was the *kyōkun-kei ōraimono* for women that tried to teach women ethics and proper deportment as an educational philosophy, it was the *shōsoku-kei ōraimono* for women that provided teaching materials useful for commoners in their actual lives. There were about as many varieties of *shōsoku-kei ōraimono* for women as there were *kyōkun-kei*.

Shōsoku-kei Ōraimono for Women

Shōsoku-kei ōraimono for women are compilations of sample letters for women.[5] The purpose of these *ōraimono* is to familiarize a woman with the forms and techniques used in writing letters and other documents for a variety of occasions considered necessary for everyday life.

As previously mentioned, *ōraimono* were originally developed as compilations of letters used as textbooks. Unlike today, when electronic means of communication have largely supplanted the post, in early modern Japan, letters played a crucial role in people's social lives. In other words, letters were an important means of communicating over large distances and for linking people both near and far. The writing of letters helped formalize and regularize social relationships between people by the levels of politeness and courtesy that they employed. Furthermore, during the early modern era, when a monetary economy and transportation were being developed, letters became essential in daily life, for everything from commercial transactions to shopping. The distinctive feature of *shōsoku-kei ōraimono* for women was that they recorded in rich detail the subject matter considered necessary to learn at various important turning points and events in one's life, such as seasonal events and rites of passage.

The content of these *shōsoku-kei ōraimono* can be divided into the following three categories.

- Model letters for the seasons: letters related to the five main festival days (January 1, March 3, May 5, July 7 and September 9) and other annual events; and letters related to seasonal occasions, such as midsummer and midwinter greeting cards.
- Model letters for rites of passage: letters related to the turning points during the life of a woman, including birth, events of childhood, coming of age and marriage.
- Model letters for a range of everyday matters, such as: leisure, get-well cards, letters to convey sympathy after a disaster, letters to request or recommend domestic help, and notes for the borrowing of money or property.

Common among these three categories are example letters that involve the exchange of presents or gifts; many of the letters contain social invitations to get together. The following is a list of the contents of some of the model letters recorded in the *Onna yobun karanishiki* (1735).

- New Years greetings and replies
- Letter indicating that the writer will send a single branch with blossoms and a

[5] See Amano Haruko, *Joshi shōsokukei ōrai ni kansuru kenkyū* (Tokyo: Kazama Shobō, 1998).

three-colored diamond-shaped rice cake for the Peach Festival, a festival for girls held on March 3

- Letter of thanks for sending a doll to one's daughter for the Peach Festival
- Letter stating that the writer will send a decorative paper ball and a rice dumpling wrapped in bamboo leaves for the Boys' Festival, a festival for boys held on May 5
- Letter inviting someone to go blossom-viewing during the season of cherry blossoms
- Letter inviting someone to go on an excursion to see the autumnal foliage during the autumn season
- Midwinter greetings
- Letter stating the writer will send baby clothes and food to celebrate the birth of someone's baby boy
- Letter stating the writer will send a get-well doll to the family of a girl who has been cured of smallpox

In addition to the examples shown here, the *shōsoku-kei ōraimono* also frequently included letters about such pleasurable events as boating excursions and year-end parties. In the early modern era, letters often included the exchange of personally composed poems at each change of season, but gradually there was an increasing number of letters that emphasized seasonal amusements.

Special Calligraphic and Literary Styles for Women

In Japan, written characters are not merely a means of communication. Importance is also attached to the artistic qualities of the calligraphy, that is, to writing characters "beautifully." As a consequence, a calligraphic style peculiar to women was developed and disseminated by way of the *ōraimono.*[6] In particular, most of the *shōsoku-kei ōraimono* published in the first half of the early modern era placed an emphasis on the beauty and artistic qualities of the written characters. There were even some women who became famous as calligraphers.

For example, Figure 3 shows a page from a *shōsoku-kei ōraimono* for women entitled *Onna yobunsho karanishiki* (1735):[7]

[6] See, for example, Koizumi Yoshinaga, *Nyohitsu tehon kaidai* (Tokyo: Seishodō Shoten, 1998).

[7] See also, Amano Haruko, "Kaidai onna yobunsho karanishiki," in *Edo jidai josei bunko* 80 (Tokyo: Ōzorasha, 1997): 1-8.

A Page from *Onna yobun karanisiki*

Fig. 3

This text was written using a beautiful flowing calligraphic style by Haruna Suma, a female writer who was extremely popular at the time.[8] *Kana* characters are written using a technique called, *renmen*, (long and unbroken line) which links each *kana* character with those above and below it (See Fig. 4). Although, in principle, each single syllable is written using a single *kana* character, groups of characters can be greatly simplified, as shown in the circled section in Figure 4, which is read *ma-i-ra-se so-u-ro-u*.

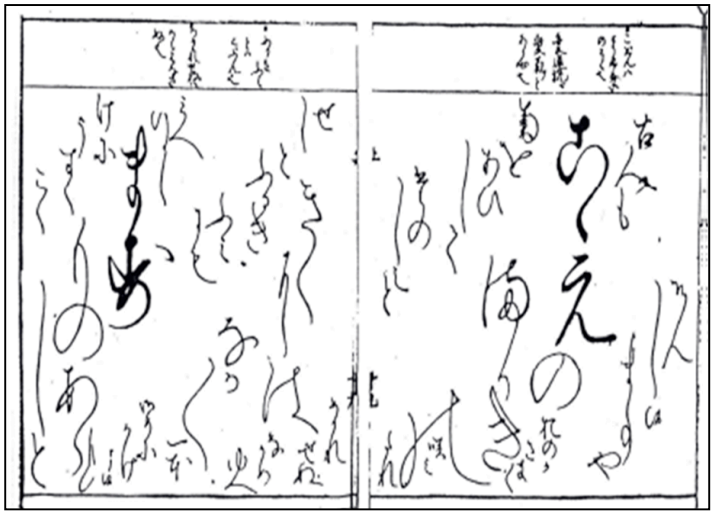
Renmen

Fig. 4

[8] Haruna Suma also wrote the text *Nyohitsu iromidori* in 1724.

The five original characters have been abbreviated and stylized so that the original characters can no longer be individually recognized. In other words, in addition to the single *kana* characters, groups of characters with special readings became part of the written code, and *ōraimono* served to disseminate them.

From Complex to Simple Writing Techniques

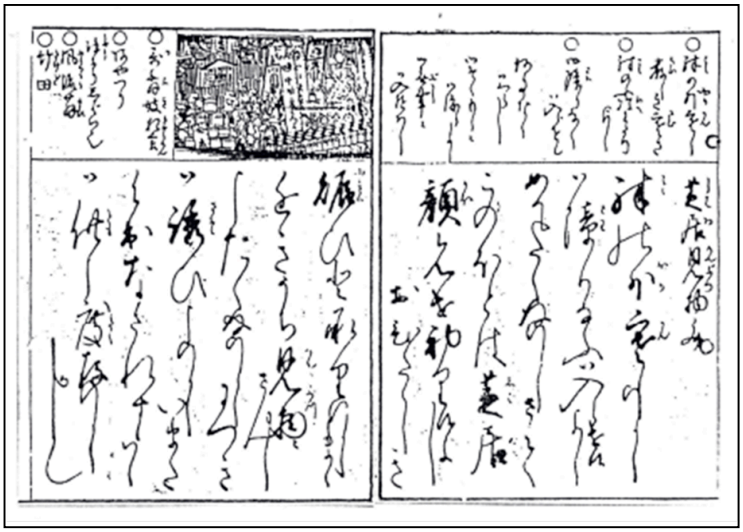


A Page from *Toryu onna yobunsho*

Fig. 5

Figure 5 shows a page from the *Toryu onna yobunsho* (1682). This sample letter has been written using a technique called *chirashigaki* (scattered writing). The text flows in all directions, and is composed using ornate characters that appear as though they are dancing from side to side. Although overall there is an emphasis on artistic qualities, it is a writing technique with complex rules, including the order in which characters are read.

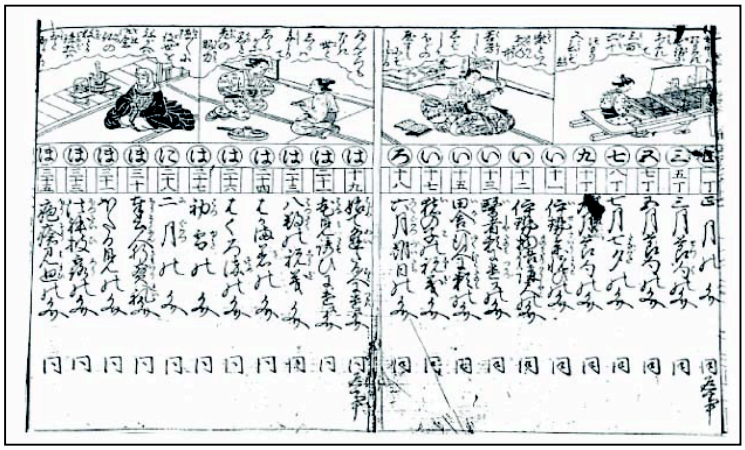
In the latter half of the early modern era, the *shōsoku-kei ōraimono* for women began to lose its quality as a highly artistic copybook with complex writing techniques, and the calligraphic style began to be simplified. These changes reflect a period during which the demand for literacy by women was spreading through the common classes. In contrast to Figure 5 that illustrates the ornate *chirashigaki* style, Figure 6, showing a page from *Onna buntsū takara bukuro* (1817) is an example of a *shōsoku-kei ōraimono* written using a simpler calligraphic style that became increasing prevalent by the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries.



A Page from *Onna buntsū takara bukuro* (1817)

Fig. 6

In the latter part of the early modern period, there was an increase of *shōsoku-kei ōraimono* containing samples written in simpler and more easily mastered writing techniques than earlier. In addition, the number of example sentences recorded in a single *ōraimono* volume for women increased. At the same time there was an increase in the number of *ōraimono* for women that included such things as indexes making them easier to use. Clearly the emphasis had shifted from complexity to convenience of use and accessibility of information. Figure 7 shows a portion of the table of contents from *Onna bunshō takara kagami* (1775). To make it easier to find information, a table of contents was added, with entries listed in the Japanese equivalent of alphabetical order. This allowed searches in the main text to be carried out with ease as required. For example, if one thought of inviting an



A Page from *Onna bunshō takaragami* (1775)

Fig. 7

acquaintance to go "blossom-viewing" (*ha-na-mi*), all one had to do was look for *hanami-ni sasou bun* (blossom-viewing invitations) under *ha* in the table of contents, and one would know that such a letter was printed on page 21.

Shōsoku-kei Ōraimono as Reflections of the Changing Lives of Women

Since *shōsoku-kei ōraimono* for women are compilations of sample letters, by investigating the subject matter of the letters, we can get a better idea of how women lived during early modern times. There were a large number of letters concerning travel written by women from the middle- to the late-Edo period. In addition to journeying to worship at the Ise Shrine, which was always extremely popular, there are frequent entries related to going to hot springs for medical purposes and sightseeing for the sake of enjoyment. As a result, there was much attention given to invitations to others to accompany one on a trip, to the selection of farewell gifts, and to inquiries about the health of those traveling. Entries also showed concern about those back at home, a need to recognize the efforts of someone who had returned home after traveling, a concern about how gifts would be distributed after one returned home, and the need to exchange letters or gifts in return for the receipt of presents or gifts. The expansive coverage of these kinds of events suggests the extent to which occasions requiring the exchange of letters had increased. There were also a large number of invitations to parties. Furthermore, a notable increase was also observed in sample letters related to forms of recreation, especially pilgrimages to shrines and going to see plays and other types of theater. Sample letters requesting an introduction to a skillful beautician prior to going to the theater also appeared. The content of these sample letters indicate that there were increasing opportunities for women to get dressed up and go out together. It is interesting to note that, despite the *kyōkun-kei ōraimono* for women declaring it "undesirable" that women leave their homes to visit a shrine or go to the theater, sample letters describing in detail exactly how to attend just such events regularly appeared in *shōsoku-kei ōraimono* for women.

Attention should also be drawn to the fact that by the middle to late Edo period there are a large number of sample letters related to commercial activities, such as requests for maidservants, the lending of money or goods, the placement of orders, and other business. The changes in subject matter of educational materials for women suggest that against the backdrop of expanded commercial activity, it had become common in urban areas for women to be participating in business practices. In addition, the increasing numbers of various *ōraimono* for women suggest that there was a rapid increase in the number of girls learning how to write at preparatory schools.

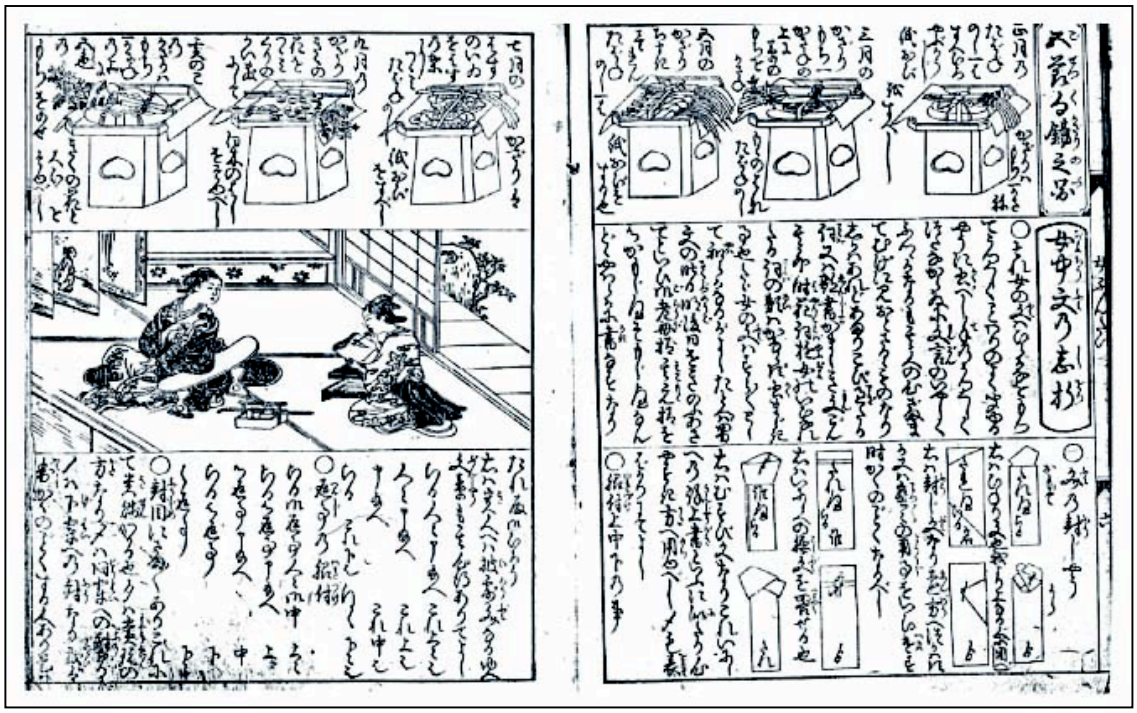
The Demand for Literacy and the Social Functions of *Shōsoku-kei Ōraimono*

During the latter part of the early modern era, the contents of letters used as models in *shōsoku-kei ōraimono* for women became standardized. Furthermore, transcribing the sample letters verbatim was recognized as being acceptable and proper. Analyzing the contents of the sample letters, it is clear that, while various annual events and rites of passage underwent transformations, the contents and styles of letters in *shōsoku-kei ōraimono* for women had become entrenched in the lives of the people. This was particularly true of the *chōnin* class in the rapidly growing towns and cities. It was the spread of standardized *shōsoku-kei ōraimono* that established the practice of gift-giving associated with letters. It was also the dissemination of these materials that gave rise to particular forms of social interaction. Based on models provided in these books, women now engaged in seasonal gift giving and the sending of greetings and invitations to relatives, acquaintances and others. They displayed greater sensitivity in their "consideration" for their domestic help. While their husbands were away from home they took orders and wrote letters of payment and receipts for goods using the models provided in *ōraimono*. The model letters became essential to maintaining relationships with the family's customers. Such services provided by a merchant housewife, all requiring literacy, came to reflect the family's education and status. Images of merchant women with literacy and cultural interests, in turn, begin to surface in the *shōsoku-kei ōraimono* for women. We frequently see images of women going on blossom viewing, boating, and other seasonal excursions. We see illustrations of women traveling to Ise and to other places of historic interest and scenic beauty around the country. We see also images of women getting together and going to the theater. The *shōsoku-kei ōraimono*, then, not only promoted new forms of social interaction among women, they reflect new images of acceptable behavior as well.

The Unique Cultural Contributions of *Ōraimono*

Kyōkun-kei, *shōsoku-kei* and other *ōraimono* for women had many features that distinguish them from today's textbooks. Since they were used as copybooks, they were written with large characters and in the cursive *renmen* style. Since they were also used as models for letters, their contents were varied and a wide variety of articles on diverse topics could be appended to the main text. Finally they were lavishly illustrated with a great many pictures and diagrams. This was because *ōraimono* were intended for general sale and were designed for the widest possible use. While some were simple and inexpensive, and used mainly for the *tenarai* portion of the main text, others were attractively designed and meant to appeal to a broad constituency of townspeople. Still others were meant to appeal to high

end consumer tastes and had superb bindings and expensive illustrations. Some of the *ōraimono* for women were particularly striking. These would have an assortment of illustrated articles providing wisdom for daily life, tips on health maintenance, anecdotes from daily life, fortune-telling, and fashion trends. Figure 8 shows a page from an article in *Onna bundai ayabukuro* (1744) with all of the accompanying illustrations, diagrams and supplementary explanations for the text.



A Page from *Onna bundai ayabukuro* (1744)

Fig. 8

Some of these popular *ōraimono* dealt with female personal appearance, fortune-telling, how to write on envelops, didactic verses for women, wordbooks, how to remove stains from clothes, and other practical matters. Other *ōraimono* became popular because they featured a well-known author or artist. Figure 9 shows a page from an *ōraimono* for women that highlights an illustration by the popular artist, Nishikawa Sukenobu.

Clearly *ōraimono* for women during the Edo period were unlike what came to be subject specialized textbooks in the modern school system. They were also not just simple copybooks for children either. They were more like what might be called “comprehensive textbooks for life,” loaded with a broad range of wisdom, ethics, practical suggestions and

An Illustration by the Popular Artist Nishikawa Sukenobu

Fig. 9

technical advice for everyday life in the early modern age. They were also commercial products that utilized their diverse and comprehensive nature as well as artistic qualities to attract attention for the purpose of popular consumption. Because *ōraimono* catered particularly to townspeople they were an important factor in the spread of literacy among the commercial sectors, both men and women.

How Children Learned to Read and Write in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Japan

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As part of my research on the history of early childhood education, I have analyzed family precepts (*kakun)* and religious affiliation registers (*shūmon aratame chō*) in order to better understand birth control and rituals for growth and development in Japan during the Tokugawa period (1603-1868). This paper examines the potential for future research using these primary historical materials in the hope that they can contribute to the study of literacy.

Relationships Between Parents and Children and Attitudes Toward Education Before Tokugawa

What were some of the characteristics of families' attitudes toward education during the Tokugawa period based on family precepts and guides to raising children? It was during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that ordinary Japanese families first began to show a strong interest in early childhood education. Family precepts describe a family's rules, attitudes toward the future, and the training of children. In samurai families, the tradition of writing down precepts for family members to read began, in some cases, as early as the thirteenth century.

The earliest examples of samurai family precepts were characterized by broadly dividing the life cycle into the three stages of childhood, adulthood, and old age, with a strong emphasis on adulthood, as the period regarded as the culmination of a life. Hence childhood was only briefly touched on.[1] Furthermore, the family precepts of the thirteenth century advocated unconditional obedience to one's parents in exchange for the inheritance of fiefs. Above all, these precepts advocated "filial piety" as the key value in familial relationships.

However, if we turn to articles on education from the fifteenth century, a more detailed division of ages appears, based on empirical observations. Although the *Kadensho* (1400) –

[1] Ohta Motoko, "Kinsei kosodateron e no dōhyō: 13-18 seiki buke kakun ni okeru yōjikan to yūgikan," in Nihon Hōiku Gakkai, ed., *Hōikugaku nempō*, (1987): 156-170.

an educational treatise on the arts by Zeami – is famous as for its discussion of lifecycles, in this paper, I will introduce *Sekyōshō* (author unknown), a text from the beginning of the fifteenth century.[2]

The *Sekyōshō* states that "the period from birth until age seven, when a child learns to read and write, is most crucial." Thus, attention is drawn to early childhood as the period when the character of a child is formed. The period up until a child was seven is divided further into two stages. It appears that the stage up to age three was when a child would live with his father and a wet nurse, from age four was when the child would come to understand discipline and proper behavior. Emphasis was placed upon the personalities or character of the people bringing up the child, namely the child's father or a wet nurse. Compared to theories on child-rearing during the Tokugawa period, which I shall discuss shortly, this era is characterized by the fact that children aged three and under were not yet regarded as suitable subjects for education.

The period from seven to thirteen was when a child would commence training at a temple, and it was here that he would be taught the specific routines of reading and writing. At thirteen, the child would leave the temple, and until the age of twenty, would serve under the instruction of a wise adult, in order to prepare for an independent life. During his twenties, the student would continue with his studies and would also be expected to contribute to society in some way. During his thirties, he would gain an understanding of military affairs and social deportment. The late thirties would be the time when success or failure would be determined, so was seen as particularly important. Finally, during his forties, the guide explains, a person ought to set his sights on raising his successor.

Furthermore, with regard to succeeding to the position of family head, it was said that from seven until fourteen or fifteen, the actions of a boy should be well observed, and he should be disciplined even if it meant thrashing or beating him; from seventeen or eighteen until twenty one or two, whether by word or other means, education should be devoted to moral learning. Thus, once he has turned twenty-one or two, "tell him something once or twice, but on the third time, disown him." In other words, during childhood parents should discipline their child even if it meant corporal punishment; during adolescence they should educate him in values. If, however, after all this he is still not suitable to take over as head of the family, he should be disinherited. *Sekyōshō* provided detailed proscriptions for the training of children during the early years, but by adolescence children were seen as relatively autonomous.

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[2] Anonymous, *Sekyōshō* in *Kosodate no sho 1*, eds. Yamazumi Masami and Nakae Kazue, (Heibonsha, 1976): 59-66.

The *Imagawajo* of the fifteenth century contains the following poem: "If a parent truly feels sincere when thinking about his child, he must not have misgivings when reprimanding the child."[3] The basis for the parent's authority in this case lies in the subjective notion of sincerity. However, parents believed that children could be made to act according to their unilateral will. Even though bonds of affection in parent-child relationships grew progressively stronger in the pre-Tokugawa years, authority in parent-child relationships was still understood to flow unilaterally from parent to child.

Relationships Between Parents and Children and Attitudes Toward Education During the Tokugawa Period

Guides on raising children during the Tokugawa period can be distinguished from those of earlier centuries by their insistence that education should begin earlier in the life cycle than was previously believed. Although the view that there should be no education for children aged three or younger was upheld in works like Ieyasu's *Tōshōgū Goshōsoku*,[4] a clear shift can be seen if we look at the family precepts in *Kaibara Atsunobu Kakun* from the end of the seventeenth century:

> "In order to educate a young child, a parent must first talk with his child while partaking a meal. At such times, the child will feel joy looking at his parent's face, or will recognize how angry the parent is by watching his expression. Thus, the parent is habitually teaching their child something**.**"[5]

As we enter the eighteenth century, we see that the writings contained in Ekken's *Wazoku dōji kun* also emphasize the fact that precepts ought to begin from infancy. "From the outset, parents must not be overprotective of a child. On the contrary, if they are overprotective, the child will end up harmed." "Generally, if a child's education is initiated early, he will be able to distinguish between good persons and bad. This is a good upbringing as thought by people of old." "An ordinary common person without intelligence will say, 'it is useless to commence the education of a child from an early stage as the child will simply lose the will to learn. Therefore, one should let the child do as he pleases. The child will naturally get better as he acquire wisdom.' These are the words of a fool. Such a

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[3] The family precepts which Imagawa Ryōshun (a military commander of the fourteenth century, b. 1326) wrote and gave to his younger brother was published in 1630s as a book of ethics and calligraphy for children.

[4] Tokugawa Ieyasu, "Tōshōgū Goshōsoku," in Yamazumi and Nakae, eds. *Kosodate no sho 1,* pp. 70-71.

[5] Kaibara Ekken, *Kaibara Atsunobu Kakun* (1686), in *Ibid.,* p. 89.

conviction is an enormous hindrance to education."[6]

From a relatively early period, Ekken promoted education from early childhood in a most systematic manner. Similar views are also apparent in Nakae Tōju (1608-1648), Yamaga Sokō (1622-1685), and other Confucian scholars from the middle of the seventeenth century. What is particularly interesting to note about guides on raising children from the seventeenth century onward is that they begin to discuss reflectively what makes good parenting. Forward-thinking people started to believe that children did not necessarily develop as parents hoped. These guides began to suggest that if a child was not being brought up particularly well, part of the problem rested with the parents. Hayashi Shihei has said, "It is an unfortunate fact that, although parents know that a child is created from sexual intercourse, they do not know how to educate that child," and, "Feeling secure or feeling delight from having children is only experienced until the child turns eleven or twelve. In reality, there is no parent who feels secure just because they have had children."[7] Such sentiments could probably be described as the beginning of bilateral parent-child relationships in Japan.

Tōju and Sokō also comment on the problem of parents who treat children with indulgence or favor. For parents who have a strong attachment to their children, the parent's own "interest" goes hand in hand with a strong interest in education hoping for a happy and fruitful life for their child's future. For the first time, scholars begin to question parents' strong attachment to their children and how these kinds of parents ought to perform their duties.

Thus, some scholars of early modern times had a strong interest in education. They had begun to take responsibility for the education of children and to reflect on how to raise children.

The Potential of Diaries and Autobiographies for Literacy Research

In addition to the official logs related to the administration of feudal domains, there were scores of other records kept during the Tokugawa period, including the official logs of villages and the daily commercial reports of merchants. There was also a steadily increasing number of housekeeping diaries which attempted to record the affairs of a household for the sake of its descendants. Authors have previously adopted

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[6] Kaibara Ekken, *Wazoku dōji kun*, vol. 1, in *Nihon kyōiku shisō taikei: Kaibara Ekken* 1 (Nihon Tosho Sentaa, 1979): 166-8, 173.

[7] Hayashi Shihei, *Fukei-kun*, in *Kosodate no Sho 2*, eds.Yamazumi Masami and Nakae Kazue (Heibonsha, 1976): 66.

micro-historical techniques for the purpose of studying birth control, in which they read a small number of diaries in detail, and compare them with religious affiliation registers[8] for the regions under review. However, differences in social class, differences resulting from birth order, and gender differences led to large variations in learning opportunities among individuals. Thus, for studies on literacy using housekeeping diaries, it is necessary to conduct research which covers a larger number of diaries.

Among the different kinds of diary-related research, research on the diaries of writing school teachers is of special significance. Ishiyama Hidekazu introduces the *Bunkichi Diaries*, which record the appearance of children who dislike studying.[9] Such fine historical materials provide a clear picture of the master-pupil relationship and relationships among schools, parents, and local communities. Furthermore, in conjunction with the diaries, pupil registers, and registers of religious affiliation effectively describe the state of literacy in the regions under study.

Although their numbers are limited, autobiographies are also historical materials of great interest. Autobiographies from the latter half of the seventeenth century to the nineteenth century are limited to such people as distinguished scholars, politicians and performers. There are instances where people have become aware of the significance of learning and reading in the formation of oneself as a person.[10]

Although I am unable to report on much at this stage, from the diaries and autobiographies which I have read so far, I will describe below the processes by which children learn to read and write .

Perspectives on Learning to Read and Write from Diaries

In the case of samurai families that served at the daimyo's residence in Edo, considerable efforts were directed at ensuring that their children acquired an education that included Japanese calligraphy. A good example is *Oritaku shiba no ki* (1716) by Arai Hakuseki (1657-1725), known as the first real autobiography in Japan. It is famous for the anecdote that, in the late autumn when Hakuseki was nine, he would pour two cups of

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[8] Registers of religious affiliation, or *Shūmon-jinbetsu aratame chō* (SAC), are historical materials recording populations by household, in which historical demography is used in family reconstruction methods. They also allow the individual life courses of particular family members to be followed. See Ohta Motoka, "Takasekidō Nikki ni miru banshu nōson no kazoku seikatsu to kosodate," in *Tokugawa Nihon no raihukōsu*, ed. Ochiai Emiko (Minerubua Shobō, 2006).

[9] Ishiyama Hidekazu, "Tenarai juku ni miru Edo jidai no kyōiku bunka: Ono-juku no jirei kara," in *Kinsei ni okeru chiiki shihai to bunka*, ed. Kitahara Susumu (Okawa Shobō, 2003): 348-365.

[10] Ohta Motoko, "Kaisō no naka no yōnenki: jijoden ni yoru ie to kazoku no ningen keiseishi kenkyū 1," in *Shōhoku Kiyō* no. 27 (2006): 37-51.

cold water over himself under the verandah to keep him awake so that he could complete the daily routine of writing four thousand characters imposed by his father.[11]

It is said that when he was aged three, according to traditional Japanese reckoning, he demonstrated an interest in characters. One day when he crawled to a *kotatsu* and playfully began tracing characters from a picture book, his parents were so delighted that they had his script made into a folding screen. In so doing Hakuseki's parents undoubtedly intended to encourage the development of his talent.[12]

Hakuseki began learning to write in earnest at age eight when he was assigned to a calligraphy teacher. In the autumn of his eleventh year, he graduated with *Teikin ōrai* (household precepts), and when he was thirteen, he had become such an eminent calligrapher that he would write official letters for Lord Tsuchiya Toshinao, a direct vassal of the shogun.

By the late eighteenth century, in works such as *Jugyōhen* (1783) Emura Hokkai (1713-1788) was recommending the use of picture books for infants in their initial stages of learning.[13] It is possible that Hakuseki's experiences had had an influence on home education in samurai families, or the spread of these kinds of home initiatives had already taken hold during Hakuseki's time earlier in the century.

In the family biography, *Mukashibanashi* (1812), written by Tadano Makuzu (1763-1825), the eldest daughter of Kudo Heisuke (1734-1800), who was a physician to the Sendai domain at its Edo residence, there appears an anecdote that bears on early childhood training. From a young age, Makuzu's mother had undergone strict training from her parents in reading, writing, and sewing. Makuzu's mother was unhappy that every morning before breakfast she was made to revise poetry. She would deceive her parents by pretending to revise the poetry, so in the end she never understood it.[14] What is of interest is the fact that, through reminiscing about her childhood days, Makuzu's mother was attempting to pass down wisdom on raising children. The fact that consideration for motivating children to learn had become common sense for parents in samurai families of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, coincides with the previously mentioned development of guides to raising children, and with the recommendation for education based on the personalities of individuals.

As an example of child-rearing in lower-ranking samurai families who lived in regional

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[11] Joyce Ackroyd, *Told Round a Brushwood Fire: The Autobiography of Arai Hakuseki* (Translation of *Oritaku shiba no ki*) (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979): 60

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 59.

[13] Emura Hokkai, *Jugyō-hen* (1783) , in Yamazaki and Nakae, eds., *Kosodate no sho 2,* pp. 147-148.

[14] Tadano Makuzu, *Mukashibanashi* (1812), in *Tadano Makuzu shū*, ed. Suzuki Yoneko (Kokusho Kankōkai, 1994): 10.

castle towns in the early nineteenth century, I will consider the *Hiuchibukuro* (1809-1835) diaries by Kusunose Ōe.[15] The diaries reveal that these families shared the characteristic that fathers took an interest in, and felt responsible for, the elementary education of their children. But they also reveal a number of distinct features among lower-ranking samurai families in their manner of raising and educating children. First, the way in which parents took an interest in their children was more carefree than the samurai who served at a daimyo's residence in Edo. Second, signs were emerging of a growing systematization of education initiated by the domains.

In districts where the residences of lower-ranking samurai converged, neighboring children would gather, and literate parents would take it upon themselves by turn to conduct initial instruction in writing. One day, a child would be with his regular playmates at his home, while his younger siblings would be at the home of another – this is the manner by which children's instruction was being directed. In the castle town at Kōchi, there were about twenty private academies (*shijuku*) around this time, but the samurai families did not send their children to these schools. Elementary instruction was primarily given to lower-ranking samurai families by relatives and neighbors.[16]

In the case of Tosa domain, although boys from samurai families could attend private schools from about fifteen, and enrollment at domain schools had been made partially compulsory, young people, both boys and girls, acquired an understanding of art and literature through interaction with adults at informal salons of writers. Year after year, Ōe allowed his daughters and young relatives to participate at the salon to which he belonged. Since he had a broad association with writers, he extended the learning opportunities to the children and young people around him in this way. Furthermore, if Ōe and his writer associates discovered a talented child from among their children, they would quickly and actively welcome them into their fold, and on occasion, they would introduce them to the family of the domain lord. It was not until about thirty years later that the domain took charge of elementary training of children and the domain schools in Tosa began instruction in basic writing and reading.

The *Kashiwazaki nikki* is a diary of a lower-ranking samurai and contains detailed records on child-raising.[17] According to this diary, elementary education was slightly more systematic than described above. The author of the diary, Watanabe Katsunosuke, was assigned to supervise the instruction in reading and writing for the children from the

[15] Kusunose Ōe, *Hiuchibukuro* (1809-1835), 63 volumes, stored in Kōchi Shimin Toshokan. See also Ohta Motoko, *Edo no oya-ko; chichioya ga kodomo o sodateta jidai* (Chūō Kōronsha, 1994).

[16] See *ibid*., Chapter 5.

[17] Watanabe Katsunosuke, *Kashiwazaki nikki (1839-1848)*. Kept in the archives of Kashiwazaki Shiritsu Hakubutsukan (The Kashiwazaki Museum).

residence of the minor *daimyo*. Every morning before starting his main duties, Katsunosuke was in charge of supervising the children.

The elementary training of children of better-off farmers and wealthy merchants was in certain ways different from that of the samurai class. The *Yorozugoto oboegaki cho*, by Tsunoda Tozaemon are diaries spanning the fifty-two years from 1683 to 1735, when Tozaemon was aged fifteen until he was sixty-seven.[18] Tozaemon was born the second son to a farmer positioned in the middle-upper class of his village, who had begun gaining wealth by trading hemp. The diaries reveal that, along with his business, he had accumulated arable land and eventually was able to establish a separate household. He gradually expanded his activities as a rural merchant, and in his later life he was nicknamed Kubota Daijin (Minister Kubota).

Beginning with the winter when he was fifteen, Tozaemon stayed at the house of the Shirasawamura Rihei family in the neighboring village in order to begin his education. During winter, snow would pile up in parts of the district to a height of more than two meters, so the region was well suited for studying in a concentrated manner. His learning sojourn was concentrated in two snowbound seasons: October 21 to December 28 and January 17 to April 5 when he was fifteen, and the winter periods of November 4 to December 27 and February 3 to March 27 when he was sixteen. His autobiographical descriptions become more detailed after the sojourns. During the nineteenth century, there were only three writing schools confirmed in this region deep in the mountains. While there is no record of the motive for boldly making an attempt at structured learning at this early stage at the beginning of the eighteenth century, there was probably a sense of necessity for the itinerant trade. It was expected that one would be married, able to conduct sales while traveling long distances, and be able to do the work of an adult beginning between the ages of around fifteen and twenty. So, the motive to begin one's education at an early age was clearly there.[19]

In contrast to the foregoing, there are also records that tell of children who were not good at learning to read and write. Tamura Yoshishige is the author of a famous work entitled *Nōgyō jitoku* (1841) that describes the development of intensive farming practices of pre-modern times. Although he was the son of a village official, for whom the ability to write was critical, Yoshishige's dislike for study caused both his parents all manner of grief.

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[18] Tsunoda Tozaemon, *Yorozugoto oboegaki chō*, 3 vols, (1683-1735). Kept in Nangō Village office. Also published by Fukushima Prefecture in *Ina son shi, shiryōhen 2,* (2001).

[19] Ohta Motoko, *Kodakara to kogaeshi:Kinsei nōson no kazoku seikatsu to kosadate* (Fujiwara Shoten, 2007) Chapter 1.

Once, when his mother lamented, "For people like you, sonny, who don't like to study, your only choice is to be a pauper." His grandmother then came to his rescue, "He seems to enjoy his handiwork, so he should be a carpenter." At this, his father reprimanded him, saying, "Even carpenters must know how to write. Otherwise, how do they number their timber?" In the end, Yoshishige had still not learned how to write by the time he became of age. When he was eighteen, an arithmetic teacher came to stay at the village for forty days. Again, Yoshishige was turned away: "If you haven't even learned to write, how on earth do you expect to do arithmetic? You're a disgrace." Yoshishige was exceedingly enthusiastic about farming, and since later in life he would be required to keep a farming diary, he taught himself how to write, and later left a legacy of several literary works. We can see that even though the motivation of the farmer's child to learn may not have been self-evident like the rural merchant, still his parents had high hopes for his literacy.[20]

Conclusion

Although I have only introduced relatively few diaries and autobiographies, the parents who appear in these records are passionate about their children's education. This is basically because, in a society where public appointments, positions in villages and positions within families were made by succession, parents felt a sense of responsibility for handing over the ancestral family estate and business to the next generation. Due to the class system in Tokugawa society a strong sense of family responsibility had penetrated as far as the farming class. This is not meant to suggest that Edo period families had a modern sense of the importance of education. They tended to believe that natural virtue was more important than talent. But as the class system began to break down and with the emergence of a modern school system decisive changes appeared as schools began to determine people's fates more and more based on talent.

Although most parents at the time did not make reference to the success or otherwise of their children's academic work, at the same time, they were not insensitive to the possession of talent. There are noticeable signs, as pointed out here, that they tried various measures to encourage children to more willingly take an interest in study long before a formal system of schools was implemented.

[20] Tamura Yoshishige, *Yoshishige ikun* (1873), in *Nihon nōsho zenshū* 21 (Nōsanson Bunka Kyōkai, 1981): 212.

Report of Surveys on Literacy Rates in Meiji Japan

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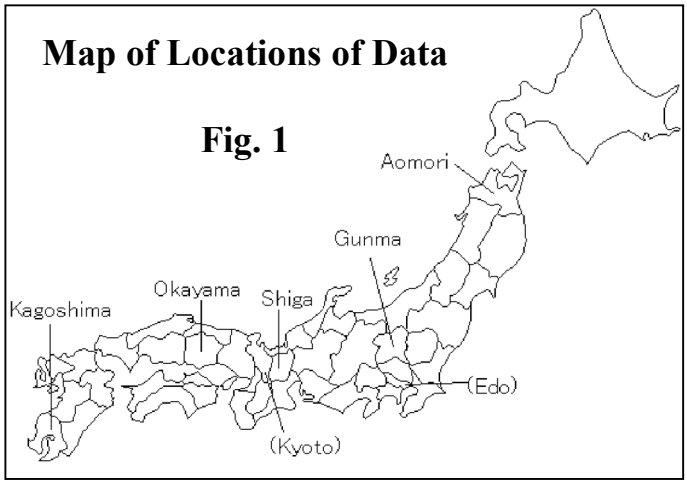
The purpose of this paper is to examine several surveys on literacy rates that were conducted on a number of prefectures during the Meiji period. This paper not only investigates the extent of literacy in Meiji Japan but also considers literacy in the period prior to the modern era.

Census Surveys of Literacy Rates

Of all the surveys from the Meiji period on literacy rates, the best materials for inferring the extent of literacy in Meiji Japan and pre-modern Japan are the surveys directed at the entire population aged six and over that were conducted in five prefectures. The percentages of people who resided in these five prefectures aged six or over, who could sign their own name is recorded in the annual reports of the Ministry of Education (*Monbushō nenpō*) between 1877 and 1893. Figure 1 shows the locations of the prefectures in which the surveys were conducted. The survey samples cover three types of regions: advanced, intermediate and peripheral. Shiga is the most advanced area among these prefectures; Okayama and Gunma are intermediate areas; Aomori and Kagoshima, located at the extremities of the main island of Honshū, are peripheral areas. The surveys targeted a total of 3,164,743 subjects.



In Table 1 below, the top row shows the aggregates of literacy rates for all five prefectures. Overall, 44.58 percent of subjects could sign their own names, 61.41percent of males and 26.99 percent of females. In the case of the Aomori Prefecture survey, the ages of subjects were not included. An additional problem with the data from Aomori is that the total population number surveyed for literacy rates does not match the overall population number. If we instead aggregate the literacy rates for the four prefectures, excluding Aomori Prefecture, we come up with the figures shown in the bottom row of Table 1, (Case 2). The total number of subjects in this case is 2,663,856. The percentage of males who could sign their own name is 65.78 percent and the percentage for females is 31.71 percent, for an overall percentage of 49.21 percent. This shows that, even as recently as 1887 (1880 in the case of Gunma Prefecture), the majority of surveyed subjects were not able to sign their own names, and at this time, Japan was still a long way from universal literacy.

Table 1 Literacy Rate in Meiji Japan

	Male	Female	Total	Year	Number
Case1	61.41%	26.99%	44.58%	1880 －1887	3,164,743
Case2	65.78%	31.71%	49.21%	1880 －1887	2,663,856

Case 1: Gunma 1880, Aomori 1881, Shiga 1887, Okayama 1887, and Kagoshima 1888

Case 2: Excludes Aomori

Each of the surveys was conducted in different years. Table 2 shows the results from the first year each survey was conducted. There have already been studies about these surveys including my own and Professor Richard Rubinger's study.[1] Therefore this paper will not elaborate on these surveys. But if we were to speculate about the state of literacy in pre-modern Tokugawa period (1603-1868) from Table 2, then it seems we could make the following points.

[1] See, for example, Yakuwa Tomohiro, "Jūkyū seiki matsu Nihon ni okeru shikijiritsu chōsa: Shiga, Okayama, Kagoshima ken no chōsa o chūshin toshite," *Niigata Daigaku kyōiku gakubu kiyō* 32, no. 1 (1990): 15-25; Kiyokawa Ikuko, "Riterashii no fukyū to sōtei kyōiku chōsa," in *Kindai Nihon shakai chōsashi* 2 (Keiō Tsūshin, 1991): 3-42.; and Richard Rubinger, "Who Can't Read and Write?: Illiteracy in Meiji Japan," *Monumenta Nipponica* 55, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 166-169.

Table 2 Literacy Rates of Five Prefectures in Meiji Japan

	Year	Male	Female	Total
Shiga	1877	89.23%	39.31%	64.13%
Gunma	1880	79.13%	23.41%	52.00%
Aomori	1881	37.39%	2.71%	19.94%
Kagoshima	1884	33.43%	4.00%	18.33%
Okayama	1887	65.64%	42.05%	54.38%

Some areas of Japan almost certainly had highly advanced rates of literacy even before 1868. However, at the same time, among the female population, there were areas where even rudimentary levels of literacy (ability to sign one's name) were low. This situation remained unchanged until the establishment of the modern school system in 1872. Among the male population, in the prefectures surveyed, at least one in three had reached this standard by the 1880s, regardless of how peripheral the area was. Despite the fact that some areas had reached a relatively high level of basic literacy in the pre-modern era, more than half the population of Japan could not even sign their own name.

Literacy and its Determinants in the Kuga District in Yamaguchi Prefecture

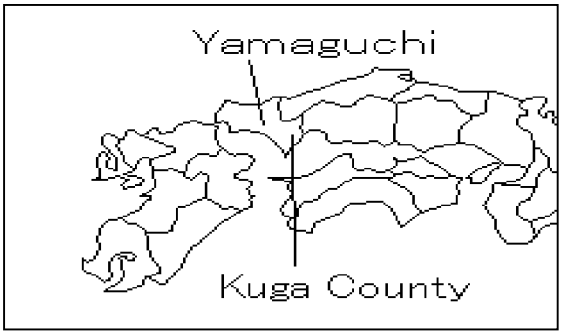
One of the interesting issues in the historical study of literacy is the question of what determines literacy rates. Naturally, this is an extremely difficult issue to unravel, and there is very limited data available. This kind of research requires both fractionalized data on literacy rates as well as other socio-statistical data. At present, there are only two sets of data from Meiji-period Japan that satisfy these conditions. One is the 1879 survey from the Kuga District in Yamaguchi Prefecture, and the other is the 1898 survey from the Ika District in Shiga Prefecture. In each of these surveys, literacy rates have been recorded according to village or school district, along with information on occupations of residents.

First, let us examine the survey on literacy rates from Kuga District in Yamaguchi Prefecture. The ratio of people residing in Kuga aged six or over, who could sign their own names, is recorded in the 1879 Register of School Statistics.[2] Conducted in 1879, the survey was completed only seven years after the introduction of the modern school system, so it is likely that the impact of school education was quite minimal. The number of people

[2] "Meiji 12-nen gakuji tōkei suitō shoyūhin hyō," (A Chart of Education Statistics for 1879) This is housed at the Yamaguchi Kenritsu Monjokan in the Yamaguchi Prefecural Archives.

surveyed was approximately 135,000, and the data has been aggregated according to the school districts applicable at the time.

The location of the Kuga District, Yamaguchi Prefecture, is shown in Figure 2. Yamaguchi Prefecture is situated at the far western end of the main island of Honshū, and is a considerable distance from the central Kansai (Kyoto and Osaka) or the eastern Kantō (Tokyo) regions. The Kuga District is located on the east side of Yamaguchi Prefecture, so it is also situated far from the center of politics and the economy, in the western district of Yamaguchi Prefecture. Accordingly, it could come be considered a peripheral area within the prefecture. However, since it contained Iwakuni machi, which was the castle town under the control of the Iwakuni feudal domain, it had some urban characteristics.



Kuga County, Yamaguchi Prefecture

Fig. 2

Table 3 shows the literacy rates for the Kuga District. The rate for males was 54.96 percent and females 16.48 percent, making a total of 36.31 percent. The distribution of literacy rates for males ranges between 19.25 percent and 98.30 percent. Similarly for females, the range is between 0 percent and 68.48 percent. Overall literacy rates range within this one area from 12.99 percent to 67.68 percent.

The overall population of the Kuga District and the breakdown of the population by

	Number	Literacy Rate	Range
Male	69598	54.96%	19.25-98.30
Female	65451	16.48%	0.00-68.48
Total	135049	36.31%	12.99-67.68

Literacy Rates in Kuga County, 1879

Table 3

occupation can be ascertained from the "1881 statistical chart."[3] The number of farmers accounted for 82.25 percent of the total working population, which shows us that, by far, the majority of the population was engaged in agriculture. Merchants made up 7.50 percent. While there were towns such as the castle town of Iwakuni, where there were a large number of people who worked in commerce and very few farmers, at the same time, there were also villages where the entire working population was involved in agriculture. Although the area enjoyed some diversity, there were an overwhelming number of villages where, by and large, most of the villagers were engaged in agriculture.

In Table 4, data from the statistical chart was used to derive the proportions of occupations for each school district. The table also shows the correlation coefficients between these proportions and literacy rates.[4]

	Farmer	Merchant	workman
Male	−0.459 **	0.431 **	0.265 *
Female	−0.799 **	0.703 **	0.551 **
Total	−0.676 **	0.640 **	0.490 **

N=71
exclude wrong data and 錦見、横山 where the majority of the population is made up members of the samurai
**p＜.01
*p＜.05

Correlation Coefficients Between Literacy Rates and Ratios of Occupation in Kuga County, 1879

Table 4

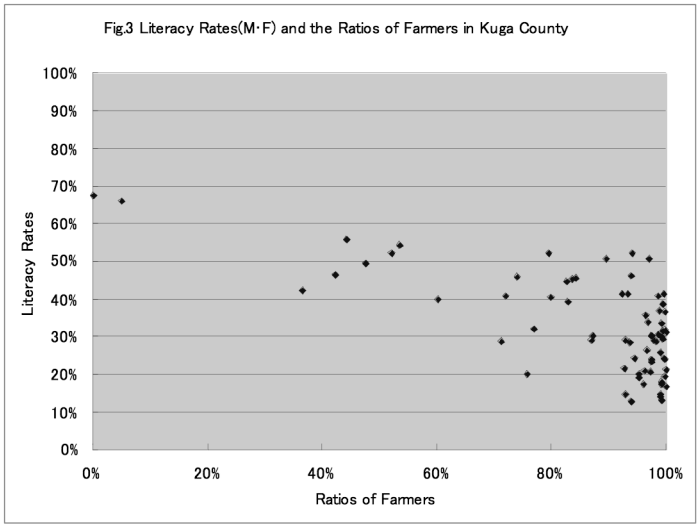
Data has been excluded from the table where such data is clearly inappropriate for occupational statistics, or in special cases, such as places where the majority of the population is made up of members of the samurai class. As the table shows, for male, female, and total, there is a negative correlation between literacy rates and the percentage

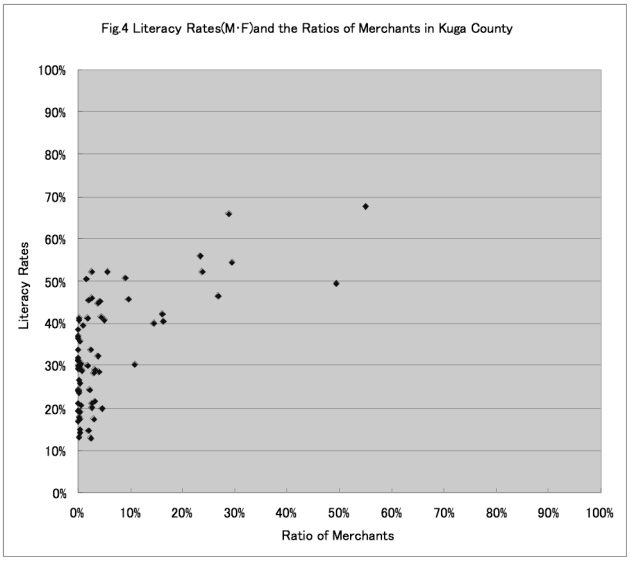
[3] "Meiji 14-nen ichigatsu ichinichi shirabe tōkei hyō" (1881 "statistical chart"). This is housed at Yamaguchi Prefectural Archives.

[4] A correlation coefficient is an indicator that expresses the correlation between two variables. It ranges from -1 to +1. For variables that have absolutely no correlation the coefficient is 0, and as the correlation increases the absolute value of the coefficient approaches nearer to 1. When the absolute value is 1, this indicates instances where there is perfect correlation between the two variables.

of farmers in the population, and a positive correlation with all other occupation types. A strong negative correlation is evident between literacy rates and the percentage of farmers, particularly for females. Conversely, a comparatively strong positive correlation is noticeable between literacy rates and percentages of merchants for females.

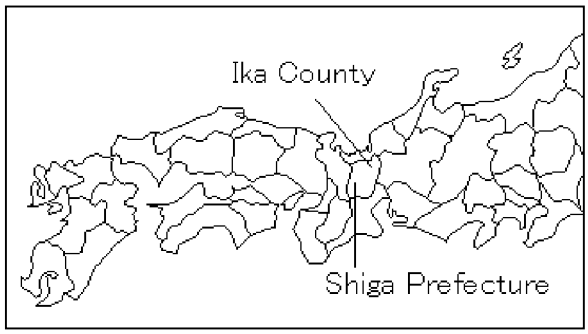
Figure 3 shows the relationship between literacy rates and the percentage of farmers. We can see that the higher the percentage of farmers, the lower the literacy rate. Figure 4 shows the relationship between literacy rates and the percentage of merchants. In contrast to the previous figure, we can see that the higher the percentage of merchants, the higher the literacy rate.





Literacy and Its Determinants in the Ika District in Shiga Prefecture

Let us now take a similar approach to the information from the Ika District in Shiga Prefecture. As mentioned earlier, Shiga Prefecture is a central region close to Kyoto, but as shown in Figure 5, the Ika District is situated at the northern extreme of the prefecture, so it is in a peripheral location within Shiga prefecture.



Ika County, Shiga Prefecture
Fig. 5

The survey shows the proportion of the total population aged six or over who can sign their own name. The survey population is 30,808 persons. The year of the survey is 1898, twenty-six years after the establishment of the modern school system. This means that this survey on literacy rates could have been considerably impacted by the school system. However, it would appear that for the majority of subjects surveyed that was not the case.

The results of the survey have been recorded in a document called "Materials for 1899 Education Annual Report."[5] Results have been recorded for each of the twelve villages in the Ika District. Table 5 shows the aggregated results. The overall literacy rate for the district was 71.88 percent, consisting of 93.14 percent for males and 50.41 percent for females. Within parts of the male population a very high rate of literacy was achieved. The distribution for males ranges between 80.05 percent and 100 percent, with an extremely low degree of dispersion. In contrast, the literacy rate for females spans a range between 26.46 percent and 80.86 percent, with conspicuous variations among

		Number	Male	Female	Total
杉野	Sugino	1659	89.07%	33.66%	61.78%
高時	Takatoki	2571	98.63%	32.22%	66.16%
北富永	Kitatominaga	2085	98.14%	30.69%	65.47%
古保利	Kohori	4174	97.78%	53.75%	75.13%
七郷	Nanasato	1894	98.40%	76.02%	87.12%
木之本	Kinomoto	3633	84.86%	70.00%	77.37%
伊香具	Ikagu	1531	100.00%	49.22%	74.40%
余呉	Yogo	1954	99.31%	80.86%	90.48%
丹生	Nyuu	1675	96.46%	58.65%	77.79%
片岡	Kataoka	2758	90.01%	26.46%	58.05%
塩津	Shiotsu	3344	80.05%	50.61%	65.61%
永原	Nagahara	3530	95.27%	43.30%	69.43%
合計	Total	30808	93.14%	50.41%	71.88%

Literacy Rates in Ika County, 1898
Table 5

[5] "Meiji 32-nen gakuji nenpō zairyō sho," (Materials for 1899 Education Annual Report) this is housed at Kohoku Library (Shiga prefecture). This material is summarized from more detailed presentations in Yakuwa Tomohiro, "Shiga-ken Ika-gun ni okeru 1898-nen no shikijiritsu chōsa," *Niigata Daigaku kyōiku gakubu kiyō* 34, no. 1 (1992): 47-53.

villages. The combined literacy rate for both males and females is distributed between 58.05 percent and 90.48 percent.

We can learn about the working population for the Ika District from 1895 statistics.[6] Seventy-nine percent of the overall population worked in the agricultural industry, and about 5 percent in commerce. Table 6 shows the correlation coefficient between literacy rates and the occupation percentages in the Ika District.

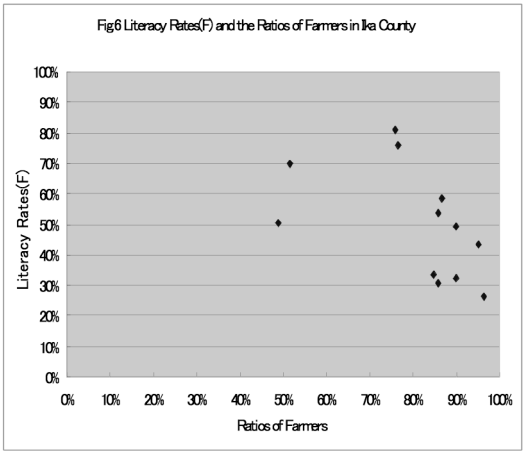
Table 6

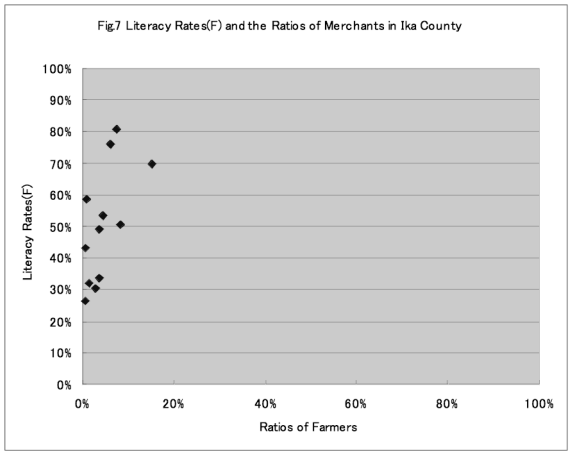
	Farmer	Merchant	Workman
Male	0.686 *	−0.480	−0.389
Female	−0.511	0.633 *	0.461
Total	−0.247	0.421	0.294

N=12 *p ＜.05

Correlation Coefficient Between Literacy Rates and Ratios of Occupations in Ika County, 1898

Similar to the Kuga District, the literacy rate for females has a negative correlation with the percentage of farmers in the population and a positive correlation with the percentage of merchants. Figure 6 shows the relationship between literacy rates and the percentage of farmers for females. We can see that the same tendency exists here as in the Kuga District. Figure 7 shows the relationship between literacy rates and the percentage of merchants for females. This also indicates the same tendency as the Kuga District.





Within the male population, however, the positive and negative correlation coefficients have been reversed. In other words, there is a positive correlation between literacy rates and the percentage of farmers, and a negative relationship with the percentage of merchants. The trend in this district differs from all other areas. However, it would appear that these results are skewed by the two villages of Kinomoto and Shiotsu. If we remove the data for

[6] "Meiji 28-nen tōkei hōkokusho hensatsu," housed at Kohoku Library.

these two villages, the results are as shown in Table 7. With data from these two villages absent, the relationship between literacy rates and occupation percentages for males in Shiga Prefecture shows a trend similar to other cases.

Why are these two villages so different? Kinomoto was the most central area within the district. Its ratio of merchants was far higher than other areas, and it was also a strategic transport junction. With a ratio of farmers of only about 50 percent, this is strikingly low compared to the district's overall ratio of 79 percent. Furthermore, this village had a large number of day laborers and rickshaw pullers. These two occupations accounted for 17.41 percent of the working population, making them second only to agriculture. A similar situation can be suggested for Shiotsu as well. Its percentage of farmers was less than 50 percent. One of Shiotsu's distinguishing characteristics was that there were a large number of day laborers, accounting for 22.26 percent of the population. These two villages had the lowest literacy rates for males within the district. Shiotsu was lowest with 80.05 percent, followed by Kinomoto with 84.86 percent. It would appear that the existence of people engaged in small-scale occupations such as casual labor is related to the low levels of literacy.

Table 7

	Farmer	Merchant	Workmen
Male Literacy Rates	−0.395	0.420	0.379

N=10 exclude 木之本、塩津

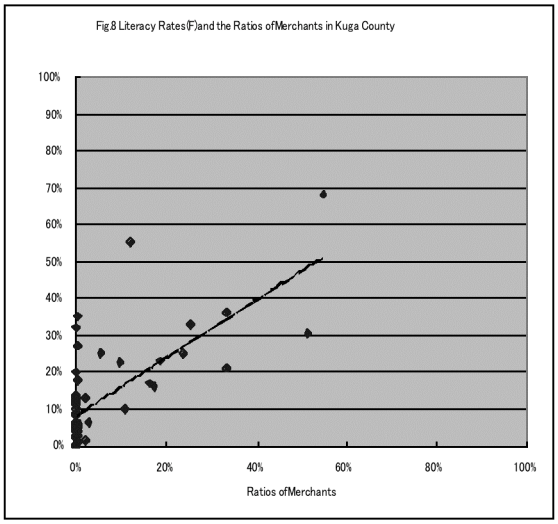
Correlation Coefficient Between Male Literacy Rates and Ratios of Occupations in Ika County, 1898

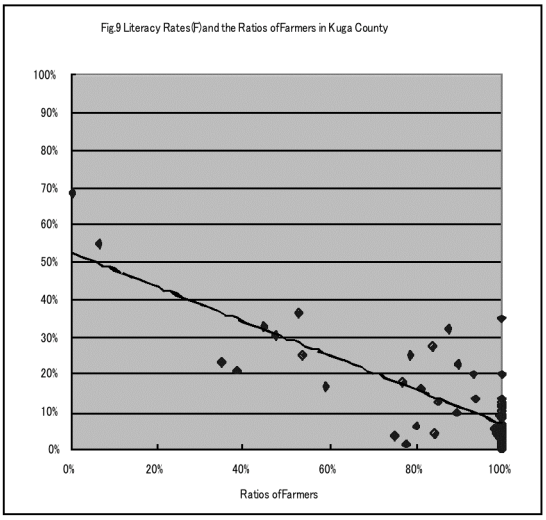
The trends for male literacy rates in the Ika District show that, in cases where the literacy rate reaches near universal levels, something that might be called an "urban effect" may operate on literacy rates. That is to say, as urban infrastructures build to some degree (increasing demands for literacy), then so too do the small-scale labor-intensive occupations that support such businesses. It would seem that such a trend can have a negative effect on literacy rates, as seen in the Kinomoto and Shiotsu cases above. However, in cases where the literacy rate is low, such trends may not operate.

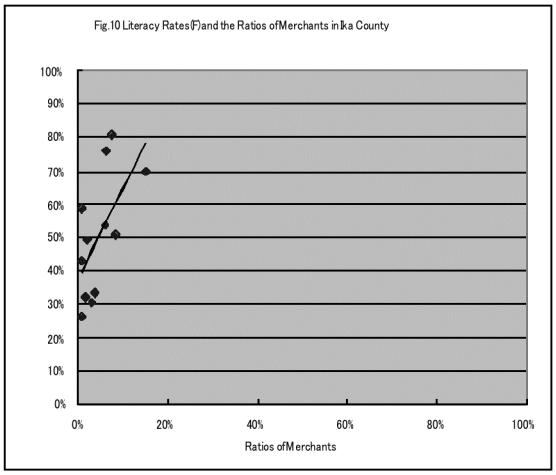
Comparisons Between the Two Districts

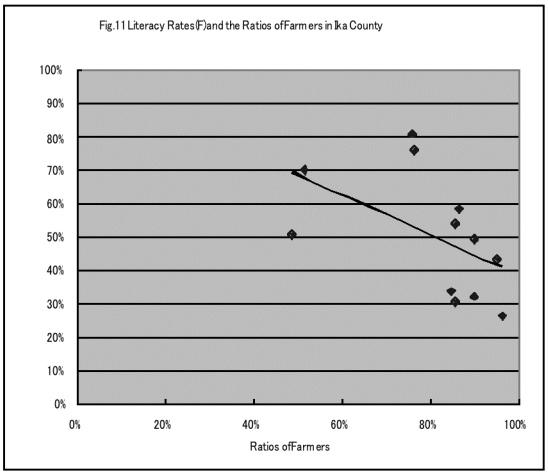
If we compare the results from the Kuga District and Ika District, we can see both similarities and differences. In both cases there was a negative relationship between literacy rates and the ratio of farmers, and a positive relationship with the ratio of merchants. This similarity is true of the literacy rates for females, which were increasing. However, even in this instance, it seems that the way in which occupation ratios affected literacy rates was different depending on the region.

The following figures illustrate the relationship between literacy rate and occupation ratios for females in both districts. The straight lines in the figures (Figure 8 to Figure 11) are regression lines, and approximate the overall trend. You can see that the regression line for the Ika District in Shiga Prefecture shows a steep gradient. In other words, if the commerce ratio increases even just a little, the literacy rate will increase considerably. In the Kuga District, the regression line is more moderate. On the other hand, looking at the relationship between literacy rates and ratios of farmers, it is of particular interest to note that, even though the axis intercepts are different, the gradients of the regression lines are not all that large.









What is most different between the two districts is the literacy rate of males. In the Kuga District, the literacy rate for males is dispersed across a certain range, but in the Ika District, the rate for all villages exceeds 80 percent, so the degree of dispersion is extremely small. Consequently, even in cases where the ratio of farmers is high and the ratio of merchants is low, the literacy rate of males in the Ika District is clearly higher than their

counterparts in the Kuga District. This is probably because the former district reflects the high literacy rate of the entire Shiga Prefecture. The difference in literacy rates between these types of regions is not something that can be simply attributed to occupation ratios. It is likely that factors, such as the location of the district and their cultural and educational environments, have a certain degree of influence in determining the overall literacy rate within each area.

Conclusion

This research confirms that a significant statistical correlation exists between literacy rates and occupation ratios. Among the occupations, commerce has the greatest positive influence on the development of literacy rates, and on the flipside, agriculture has the most negative impact. As shown with the male population in Shiga Prefecture, once a stage is reached where rudimentary literacy rates reach nearly universal levels, the relationship between literacy rates and occupation ratios changes, and a new mechanism takes hold. This phenomenon needs to be the subject of further inquiry.